

The  
Gospel In Various  
Aspects:  
A Book For The  
Anxious  
(1856)

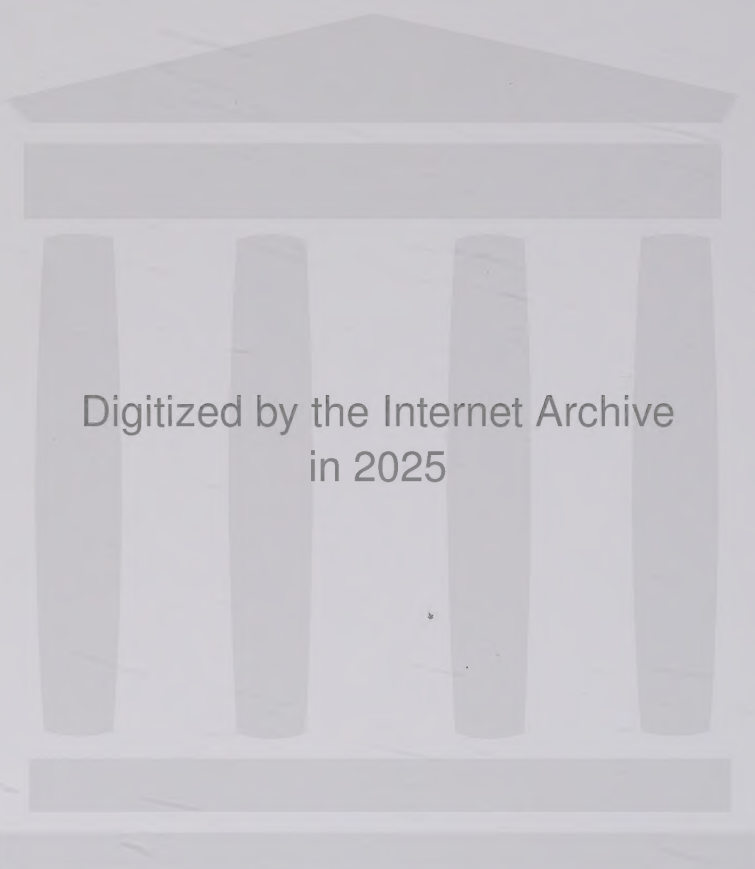


William Landels



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THE GOSPEL  
IN VARIOUS ASPECTS:

A BOOK FOR THE ANXIOUS.

BEING

Seven Lectures

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM LANDELS, 1823-1899

MINISTER OF REGENT'S PARK CHAPEL.

"Fear not . . . I bring you good tidings of great joy.

LONDON:  
JAMES NISBET & CO. 21 BERNERS STREET.

1856.

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## PREFACE.

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THE Author's belief that such a book as this was needed is his apology for its existence.

He might plead other reasons—such as “being requested to publish,” &c.—but as these would not be satisfactory to himself, he cannot offer them to others.

Perceiving that ignorance of the Gospel prevailed to a deplorable extent, even among those who regularly attend the ministrations of the sanctuary, he sought, by the delivery of these discourses, to do his part towards remedying the evil.

He ventures to think that, in some measure, they are qualified for usefulness, and has heard of instances in which his hopes have been realized; and knowing that among the members of other congregations, and among those who are members of no congregation, there were some who needed them not less than the members of his own, when he was requested to publish—though they were commenced without reference to publication—he concluded that it might serve some good purpose to give them a wider circulation than their delivery secured; nor was he uninfluenced by the wish to place in the hands of his own hearers a permanent exhibition of gospel truth.

He has sought to present the Gospel in a variety of aspects, instead of dwelling at greater length on one; having, in the course of his ministry, frequently observed that the aspect



which brought peace to one state of mind produced no impression on another, and that different turns of the gem were necessary for flashing the light into different understandings. He is not unaware of the repetition which some will not fail to notice. The aspect of the Gospel which one lecture illustrates at length, is briefly stated in others. To avoid such repetition, with such a subject, would have been difficult; with his purpose, an attempt to avoid it would not have been wise.

It may be, too, that the book contains unacknowledged repetitions of the thoughts and illustrations of other minds. The writer can honestly aver, that he has not sought to repeat what others have said; though he may have unintentionally done what he was not very studious to avoid. Withal, he fancies that, though in some points it may resemble other books, it has, as

a whole, a character of its own, and may usefully fill a place which is almost unoccupied.

Such as it is, dear reader, it is recommended to thine attentive perusal, as a message from God to thee, with the prayer that His blessing may rest upon it whose glory it humbly seeks to promote. If the gospel which it contains yields thee as much joy as the writer has derived from it, thy reading will not be in vain.

*December 26th, 1855.*

I.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL ?

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I.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

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"The glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

"Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound."

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

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GOSPEL, as most of you are aware, is the Saxon word for good tidings, and is composed of the two words, God and spell. The second of the two was their word for history, narration, speech, or message; the first was the name of the Divine Being, and also the adjective *good*, both words being written in the same manner. Accordingly

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"the Gospel," in their ears, was equivalent to the phrase, "the good tidings," in ours. Nor could they have found a more fitting designation for the subject to which it was applied, that being, above all others, emphatically *the good tidings*.

Or, perhaps, as they wrote the name of God and the adjective *good* in the same way, the Gospel may have signified to them, sometimes or always, God's tidings, as well as the good tidings. It was certainly fitted to convey to their minds this twofold idea; nor can we help feeling interested in the circumstance, or regarding it as beautifully significant, as if it would lead us to associate goodness with the tidings which come from God, and harmonising with the fact, that he is at once the author and the subject of the good tidings.

Or it may have been that, in their minds, the two ideas were never dissociated when the word Gospel was employed—that it was always understood by them in its twofold significance, and never meant good tidings only, or God's tidings only, but was to them, as it is in fact, and as it always means in Scripture, *God's good tidings*.

This, we take it, is about the most precise and expressive definition of the subject to which the



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term Gospel is properly applied. And this definition, we think, is fitted to excite most enlarged expectations. The very word "tidings" should be sufficient to awaken interest in creatures who are so fond of receiving intelligence. *Tidings*, and *tidings* in which we are concerned,—how strange it would be, and how unlike ourselves, had we no desire to ascertain what it is ! *Good tidings*—then something from which we may hope to reap advantage,—something which we shall be the happier for hearing, and which we are accordingly anxious to hear. *God's good tidings*,—then it is glorious in its import. Coming from such a Being—a Being so great, who has us so completely in his power, to whom we are so intimately related, of whose feelings in relation to us we are ignorant, whose wrath we have reason to dread,—coming from such a Being to us, it must be something which concerns us infinitely ; and as it is called his *good tidings*, it must be something fitted to dispel our fears, and to fill our hearts with gladness. This is the expectation we naturally form when we hear of God's good tidings : nor does anything deserve the name of the Gospel which does not, when known, fulfil this expectation.

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It might be deemed strange, by some, were I now to ask, before such an audience as this, What is the Gospel? Even though there are some present who have not yet obtained peace of mind from anything which they know, such a question would be deemed uncalled-for and useless. "Know what the Gospel is? Of course we do. Instructed from our infancy in the principles of the Christian religion, accustomed to read our Bibles regularly, and to frequent the house of God, you do not mean to tell us, surely, that we are ignorant of the Gospel! Although we do not enjoy peace, it is not because we do not know the Gospel. We know it well enough; and the reason why we have not found peace is, that we have never believed it aright."

So I have heard some say in substance, so thousands in this land are ready to say. Are they mistaken? Although I were judging only from what I know of the Gospel, I should say, without hesitation, Unquestionably they are. The Gospel is of such a nature that it cannot be known without giving peace. And I say so all the more boldly, arrogant as it may seem, when I find my conclusion warranted by the explicit statements of God's word. What else is the meaning of the

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following language ? “ Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.” “ They that know thy name shall put their trust in thee.” “ Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” “ By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” “ Hear, and your soul shall live.” “ This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” How is it possible for words to show more conclusively that the knowledge of the Gospel brings peace and salvation to sinners ?

The Gospel is by no means so generally or so well known, as we are accustomed to assume. Very much is designated Gospel, which is not so ; and we are often said to have preached it, when, perhaps, not a word of Gospel has been uttered. We may preach about the Gospel, say much that is good and true about it, without presenting it ; and men may know much in relation to it, without knowing the thing itself. Accordingly, with all our knowledge of things pertaining to the Gospel, and well as we think we understand the Gospel itself, there is still reason in the case of many in our congregations—much and urgent reason—for the question, What is the Gospel ?

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We sometimes apply the term vaguely to the whole of Revelation. And the application is admissible, inasmuch as Revelation contains God's good tidings, but by no means specific enough to convey to any mind an idea of what the Gospel is, there being many things in Revelation which, though true and most serviceable for their purpose, are not Gospel.

With more precision we apply it to the several histories of our Saviour's life and death; and these histories do, of course, contain the facts of the Gospel. Still, the application is so general that it does not, necessarily, give you an accurate conception of what the Gospel really is. For, though some of the clearest definitions or exhibitions of the Gospel are there, there is also much which is not Gospel, properly; and it is possible to receive that which is not Gospel, while that which constitutes its essence is entirely overlooked, or but partially perceived.

If in our preaching we insist on the truth, that sin and suffering are inseparably connected,—if we show from Scripture that “the soul that sinneth it shall die,”—that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,”—and that “God

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will yet render to every man according to his works ;"—in our popular religious nomenclature we are said to preach the Gospel. Perhaps nothing could more strikingly show the extent to which inaccurate conceptions of the subject prevail. The only thing which entitles such truths to such a designation is, that they are found in the same book as that which contains the Gospel, and have been published by the same Author. They certainly cannot, in any sense, be called good tidings for sinners. Nor is a revelation needed to make them known. Our own consciences lead us to anticipate punishment for wrong doing.

But we may approximate much nearer to the Gospel than this in our preaching, and yet fail to present it. Were I to insist on the necessity of conversion as a qualification for the enjoyment of heaven,—were I to show, as I might, from Scripture, that there is no Christianity without conversion, quoting the Saviour's words, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven ;" "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ;"—were I to explain the nature of the change, to show that it is effected by the instrumentality of the word, and that the Divine

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Spirit is its Author ;—I suppose there are scarcely any, so vague have our conceptions of the subject become, who would not give me credit for having preached the Gospel. Most men, I apprehend, would speak of a sermon embracing such matter as a Gospel sermon. And is it not so? Have you not preached the Gospel in such a case? Not a word of it, so far as I can see. I have said nothing which can be called good news, nothing which is fitted to give peace to a sinner. I have said much about conversion ; but I have not presented the converting truth. I have insisted on its necessity—I have explained its nature—I have shown by what instrumentality it is effected, and who is its Author ; but a man may know all that, and be ignorant of the truth which converts—“the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.”

Nor do we necessarily preach the Gospel, when we inculcate the doctrine of justification by faith—though such, I believe, is the general impression. I might show that “he that believeth hath everlasting life,” and “he that believeth not is condemned already.”—I might go further, and show that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”—I might even address you



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as Paul did the jailor,—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” and in doing so I should certainly be teaching an evangelical doctrine ; but, withal, unless I said more than that, I should not be preaching the Gospel. So far I should have told you what is true ; I should have taught a truth, too, which the Gospel reveals ; but not the truth which constitutes *God’s good tidings*. I have shown that you may be saved by believing ; but I have not done what is far more important, I have not presented the saving truth which you are to believe. That truth has been alluded to ; I referred to it when I spoke of your believing on the Lord Jesus Christ ; but it has not been presented. And unless I present that, however accurately, and however forcibly, I may expound the doctrine of justification by faith, I have no right to expect the saving results which are likely to flow from the preaching of the Gospel. An accurate knowledge of the doctrine of justification by faith, does not imply the exercise of a justifying faith, nor the enjoyment of a justified state. A man may be perfectly convinced that he can only be saved by believing, and yet not know the truth which he must believe in order to his being saved.

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Talk about the characteristics of the Gospel is sometimes confounded with the Gospel. We receive the impression that we know it well, because we can speak of it so freely. We prove the divinity of its origin. We expatiate on the freeness of its conditions. We extol its adaptation to the nature and necessities of man. We show the expansiveness of its genius. We trace its history as an evidence of its truth. We recount its trophies. We describe its benign influence, and predict its final triumph. And when we have done all this, we speak of having preached the Gospel, forsooth ; forgetting that, with all we have said about it, the thing itself—the glorious truth, which we have so earnestly, and, it may be, so eloquently, extolled — has not been exhibited ; forgetting that the inquiring hearer has obtained no answer to his question,—“ What must I do to be saved ? ”—forgetting that while he was eager to know the thing itself, we have been content with telling him how good and how beautiful it is—with declamation on its qualities ; forgetting, alas ! that our eulogy may only have diverted his mind from, or rendered more obscure, the great subject—just as the clouds, however gorgeous and beautiful, do serve to conceal the sun.

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With some, preaching the Gospel means preaching, what they call, the doctrines of grace ; and what constitutes the substance of these doctrines is, that God has chosen them to be partakers of a salvation which they do not deserve, and that, consequently, he will not permit them to be lost : but, having begun a good work in them, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. We have nothing to say, at present, of the truth or falsehood of these doctrines, but we do say that they are not the Gospel—they are not good tidings to sinners, as such. A man can derive no comfort from them, until he first knows that he is believing the Gospel, and is one of God's chosen. And, to say nothing of the perplexing position in which you place a man, when you teach that he must first know that he has believed the Gospel, before he is warranted in applying it to himself, which is much the same as to say that he must be satisfied that he has eaten of the food which is placed before him, before he ventures to touch it—to say nothing of the perplexing position in which you place a man by such teaching—I know that what you call the doctrines of grace cannot be the Gospel, because, according to the inspired definition of it, that is not a Gospel for saints,

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but for sinners, being "good tidings of great joy unto *all* people."

In the estimation of many sincere seekers after salvation, and of others indeed than sincere seekers, those whom we must regard as sincere Christians—their faith being much superior to their theory,—in the estimation of many such the Gospel amounts to something like this: "Although I have sinned, God will yet love me if I love and serve him. He is not my friend now, but he will, perhaps, become my friend; I may hope that he will, if I am sincerely sorry for my sins, and pray earnestly to him for forgiveness, and strive to do better in future." I believe I am not misrepresenting when I say that, in the estimation of many, this is the substance of the Gospel. I certainly have met with not a few who have no higher conception of it than this. And no doubt it does sound something like Gospel. It seems a great matter to be able to tell a sinner that God will yet become his friend, if he becomes a new man—that if he will love God, God will yet love him; and, on the part of the Divine Being, it would display no small measure of condescension. And yet, gracious as such a message seems, it is, practically, of no avail for the sinner. In his

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condition such a message brings him no good news, it ministers no consolation. What ! tell him that God will yet love him if he will first love God, when his inability to love God, in his present condition, is at once his guilt and his ruin ! Tell him that, when it is only by believing in the love of God that the enmity of his heart can be slain ! Tell him that, when the Bible testifies that "we love him because he first loved us !" Tell him God will become his friend if he is sincerely sorry for his sins, when he must see his sins in the light of God's friendship, before he can form a conception of their magnitude or their deserts, or experience a single sensation of godly sorrow ! That would be like telling the patient to cure himself, that the physician might be induced to undertake his case. It would be, in fact, telling men that they must cure their own spiritual disease before they could obtain the sympathy of the great Physician, or be welcome to the remedy which he provides—to save themselves, that they might fit themselves for being received by the Saviour ! Such a message would be no Gospel. It is no better than solemn mockery to call it Gospel. If that be all you have to tell the sinner, you have no good news for him.

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He may perish in his sins for you—must perish, if, in some way or other, he does not get hold of a higher truth. Oh, thank God! his Gospel is something infinitely better than that—something far loftier in its nature, and more gladdening in its influence—something so surprisingly gracious, that it almost staggers our belief; and scarcely could we receive it, but for the assurance that "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways."

It may be, now that we have indicated at such length what the Gospel is not, and noticed so many things which are not the Gospel, though regarded by many as such,—it may be, that a conviction now dawns upon some of you, that you are not so well acquainted with the Gospel as you supposed, and that your want of peace is rather owing to your ignorance of it than to your not believing it aright. It may be, that you are saying within yourselves, If these things do not constitute the Gospel—and you have shown plainly enough that they do not—then it is certain, that I do not know it, and have been deceiving myself all along, when I fancied that I understood, though I did not properly believe it. If this be the conclusion to which you have come,



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there was good reason why I should have sought to produce it; and I am thankful for having succeeded thus far, as you are now prepared, without prejudice, and in a spirit of earnest inquiry, to consider the question,—*What is the Gospel?*

In answering this question, perhaps the best thing I can do, in the first instance, is to quote a few of those passages of Scripture in which you have epitomes of the Gospel in its various aspects. In these epitomes you have not always the whole Gospel expressed; you need to take them in combination in order to a full representation of Gospel truth: but in each of them a part of it is expressed, and the whole implied. That is to say, you have in each some one Gospel truth, and by tracing that truth to its relations you discover the others; starting from the point with which the passage supplies you, you arrive, by inference or deduction, at an acquaintance with what constitutes, in its completeness, *God's good tidings*.

The Bible, in three words, which, were their import sufficiently pondered, would suffice to thrill the world's heart, and transform its character, presents the fundamental or central truth of the Gospel—and what I may also call the central

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truth of the universe—and these three words, the most wonderful and glorious, as well as pregnant, which ever have been or can be penned, are—*God is love!* Brief sentence, but how glorious in its import!—presenting the point in which all Gospel truth centres, describing the source whence all Gospel blessings spring. I do not say that this sentence will, of itself, and without any process of reasoning, give peace to a sinner. For, while it tells him of the Divine love, it says nothing of his relation to that love. It leaves him in doubt whether his character may not prevent that love from embracing him—whether, by sin, he is not excluded from the circle within which its favours are enjoyed. If God is love, he must love all his creatures, and will not promote the happiness of one at the expense of many. Is my relation to other beings such, that God can bless me consistently with their welfare? To this question the passage before us gives no answer, and yet it must be answered before the sinner can enjoy peace. Accordingly, the Bible, not content with revealing this great and central truth, connects it with us, and shows us the bearing of the Divine love on ourselves, when it tells us, “*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-*

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begotten Son." Here is the manifestation, the outflowing, of the Divine benevolence. It has sent Christ into the world, that he might render our salvation possible, because consistent with the welfare of other beings who are equally the objects of God's love with ourselves, and also that he might place within our reach all that is necessary to the enjoyment of spiritual and everlasting life. All the other statements of the Gospel which the Bible contains, are, in some measure, dependent on these two. They are but repetitions, or applications, or explanations of these, showing how the Saviour accomplished the work which he came to perform, and what blessings he has brought nigh to us as the result. Thus we read, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

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world." "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" showing that the Saviour has so suffered for sin, that it does not now exclude us from the enjoyment of the Divine love. Again we read, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" showing us what blessings the Divine love now presents for our acceptance, and how these blessings may be enjoyed.

You tell me, perhaps, that you know all this. If that be the Gospel, it is nothing new to you. There is not a passage of Scripture quoted, with which you have not been familiar for years. True; but do you understand—I speak to those who have not yet obtained peace—do you understand their deep and wondrous meaning? It is one thing to know the passages, and another thing to

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understand their import. You may be familiar with the words, without perceiving the truth which they convey. Your very familiarity with them may blind you to their meaning. You have heard them so often, that they do not strike you as they would one who hears them for the first time. They have become to you mere sounds, like the rhymes which you learned at school, and not the signs of things. You could not possibly be seeking peace in vain, did you know what they mean. Wherever that is understood, immediately, and without any intervening condition, irrespectively of what you are, or of what you have done, the enjoyment of peace follows as the natural result. For what *is* the meaning of those passages? What do they tell you? Why, they tell you this:—That you, sinner as you are, worthless as you are, hell-deserving as you are—that you have at this moment a friend in the Most High—that the God whose wrath you dread, loves you. Grievously as you have offended him, he has never been your enemy—never ceased to be your friend. You have excited his anger, but never his enmity. He has been displeased with you, as a parent is displeased with a prodigal child; he abhors your sinful practices, as a father the deeds

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of a dissipated son : but he has always loved you, and he loves you now, with more than a parent's love. Without exception, the Gospel tells you this ; and it tells you this as pointedly and specifically, each of you, as if it were addressed to none but yourself. Its message is not that he has a sort of vague, sentimental affection for humanity in general, while he takes no interest in individual men ; but that, while his love embraces all, it has a specific regard for each, and that on you, as truly as if you were the only inhabitant of the universe—on you, the individual sinner, he looks with a compassionate eye. His love embraces you, feels for you, watches over you, plans for your welfare. He pities your sorrows ; it would yield him pleasure would you consent to trust in him, and be at peace. While he loves the world, there is joy in his presence over one sinner that repenteth. You say, you are very sinful : I know you are. You have no good in you : I know you have not. Your heart is hard, and full of enmity against God's ways : I know it is. You say, you are unworthy of his love : I know it. Still he loves you. The message is not, that he will love you if you make yourself worthy of his love,—not that he will love you if you become



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good,—not that he loves the better portion of mankind—those who have sinned least, or have partially reformed; but that he loves the world. He has “no pleasure in the death of the *wicked*.” He is the “friend of *sinners*.” “He will have *all* men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” You say, you are not believing—that you have tried to believe and you cannot. It may be so, I do not dispute that with you now. That you are not believing, I admit. Still he loves you. The message, in this respect, is perfectly unconditional. It does not say he will love you if you believe, or after you believe—men may call that the Gospel, but it is not God's Gospel—it assures you that he loves you now. His love is not a contingency, but an existing reality. “He so *loved* the world.” As you *are* he loves you. As you sit there, at this moment, whatever may have been your past life, whatever may be your present character, he loves *you*. He sees you sitting there, with all your sins upon you, a rebel against himself, a disbeliever in his Gospel, your heart filled with enmity; and yet he loves you. You know what are the feelings with which a kind parent regards his child—how concerned he is for its welfare—how he waits not, as a

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stranger would, to be solicited, ere he confers a favour, but is constantly giving it the benefit of his foresight, and toil, and care—how, not only while the child is too young to care for itself, but when it is so foolish as to be heedless of its own interests, it never ceases to be an object of anxiety to the parent—how the attention which he gives to its interests is not the consequence of the child's entreaty, or of any contract into which the child has entered with the parent; nor is it the reward of any work which the child has done, but simply the result of parental affection—and how, if the child knew its parent's feelings, it would have good reason for feeling confident that nothing would be wanting to its happiness which that parent could supply. If you are parents—kind parents, you know this by experience; if not, you may have learned it from observation; and by this parental feeling may you form a faint estimate of the feelings with which God regards you. He is infinitely more concerned about your welfare, than a kind parent about the welfare of his helpless or thoughtless child. He does not wait to interest himself in your happiness until you have entreated him so to do, or until you have induced him by anything which you have

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done, or until you have bound him to it by entering his service; he does so irrespectively of anything in you, and though you are pursuing a course of sin and folly; and he does so simply because of the more than parental affection which he cherishes towards you. The child may be unmindful of its parent, but the parent does not forget his child. The child may be regardless of its own welfare, but the parent does not cease to care for it. And though you have wandered far from God, and are blind to your own interests, and though you are pursuing a course of which he disapproves, the parental affection is not quenched; God is better to you than you are to yourself; he interests himself in, and plans for, your welfare. And if the child, knowing its parent's feelings, might be confident that he would do all in his power for its happiness, God gives you far better reason for trusting that there is nothing necessary to your happiness which he will not freely bestow. In the gift which he has already given, in the manifestation of love which you have already received, you have the pledge that nothing will be withheld which God can supply.

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For, be it observed, these Gospel passages tell you, further, that God has given Christ for you. This is a part of the message, as important in relation to your peace as that which we have just noticed, and is as clearly contained in the passages adduced. They do not tell you, as you suppose, that God *will* give you Christ if you believe, or that he *will* give you Christ if you receive him—that were impossible, unless he were previously given—or that he *will* give you Christ if you become his child; but, that God *has* given you Christ. He “so loved the world that he *gave* his only-begotten Son.” The fact is dependent on no conditions; it is a thing done, and done for you. Whatever Christ is, he is for you. Whatever he has done, he has done for you. Whatever is in him, is in him for you. You have the authority of God’s message for asserting your claim to Christ, and you only take God at his word, if you say, humbly, with a deep sense of your own unworthiness, yet confidently, knowing that God cannot lie—you only take him at his word if you thus humbly and confidently say, Christ is mine. As surely as he was a partaker of your nature, as surely as you

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are one of the world, so surely has Christ been given for you ; " for God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son."

And then, these Gospel passages tell you also that in Christ you have all things. In his sufferings you have an atonement for your sin. These sufferings have such a relation to your sins, have so put them away, that they do not intervene between you and God's love, or prevent your enjoyment of any of the blessings which his infinite love provides. In his righteousness you have a ground of acquittal, for it hath magnified the law and made it honourable, and the Lord is well pleased with it. In him you have pardon, for past offences, " for through this man is preached unto you the remission of sins." In him you have life, for " this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." And when, on the authority of God's message, you say, Christ is mine, you receive not only Christ, but all the blessings which are treasured up in him. The cabinet is yours, with all its treasures—God's greatest and unspeakable gift, with all lesser gifts in him. He is your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption, your peace, your life, your

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all. "Ye are complete in him." There is nothing which you need, for time or eternity, which you do not find in him. "He that hath the Son hath everlasting life."

Such is the substance of God's good tidings. And is it not enough to satisfy you—to give you peace—to reconcile you to God? Oh, if still you do not enjoy peace, it is because, after all that has been said, you do not apprehend it aright. Your familiarity with the phraseology employed, has hindered your perception of the wonderful truth which it contains. You do not yet realise the bearing of that truth on yourselves. In order to this, I would beg you, ere I close, to place yourselves with me in the position of those who are about to hear the Gospel for the first time. Here we are, condemned sinners. We know not what are the feelings with which God regards us; we only know that we have rebelled against him, and are liable to endure his wrath. We are told of a message which God has sent to us, and we listen to hear what that message is. What is it?—what does it tell us?—what does God say to us? Why, he tells us that he loves us: the great God against whom we have rebelled, *loves us!* Surely that is good news;



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surely that is something worth knowing, something fitted to make us glad ! He tells us, that he has so loved us as to give Christ for us—his great, his unspeakable gift, for us. And what has Christ done for us ? Put away all our sins ; wrought out for us a perfect righteousness, with which God is well pleased. And what have we in Christ ? Why, we have pardon in him, and eternal life in him. This is God's message to you and me. And is it not a joyful sound ? Is it not good tidings of great joy ? Is it not well called the Gospel of peace, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God ?" Can you conceive of anything which would be more fitted to give you peace ? What could God tell you which it would be more desirable for you to know ? You would like to be told, perhaps, that you are believers ; but he cannot tell you that, for that is not true : you are not believers until you have received the Gospel. You would like to be told that you are a child of God ; but neither can he tell you that, for that is not true : you only become a child of God when you believe in the love that God has to you. Then, what *can* he tell you better than that which he has told you ? What message would be more likely to satisfy you ? I am a

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sinner like yourself, and this message is enough for me. It tells me all I need to know. It is enough for me to know that God loves me, and has given Christ for me. Surely that is enough to give me peace ! And it is no less true of you than of me ; what it says to one of us it says to both. The message comes to both alike. I mean to rejoice in it, and thank God for it ; and you have no less reason for rejoicing and thankfulness than I. Oh, look at it ; let it occupy your thoughts until you realise its preciousness, and know, by experience, how "blessed are the people that know the joyful sound."

In conclusion, if you have not yet found peace, let me entreat you not to look into yourself for it, nor to attempt to procure it by any effort of your own, but to direct your attention to God's message. Peace cannot come from yourself ; it can only come from God. And what you have to do is to inquire, What is God's message ?—what are the feelings with which he regards me ? Go to the Bible, that you may learn whether the message be as we have said. Whatever may be its import, you may be sure, from the way in which the Bible speaks of it, that it is something fitted to gladden you. Make it your business to ascer-

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tain what it is. We do not bid you receive our exposition ; but we entreat you to consult the Scriptures, that you may know whether that be the import of the Gospel, or that you may learn what the Gospel really is.

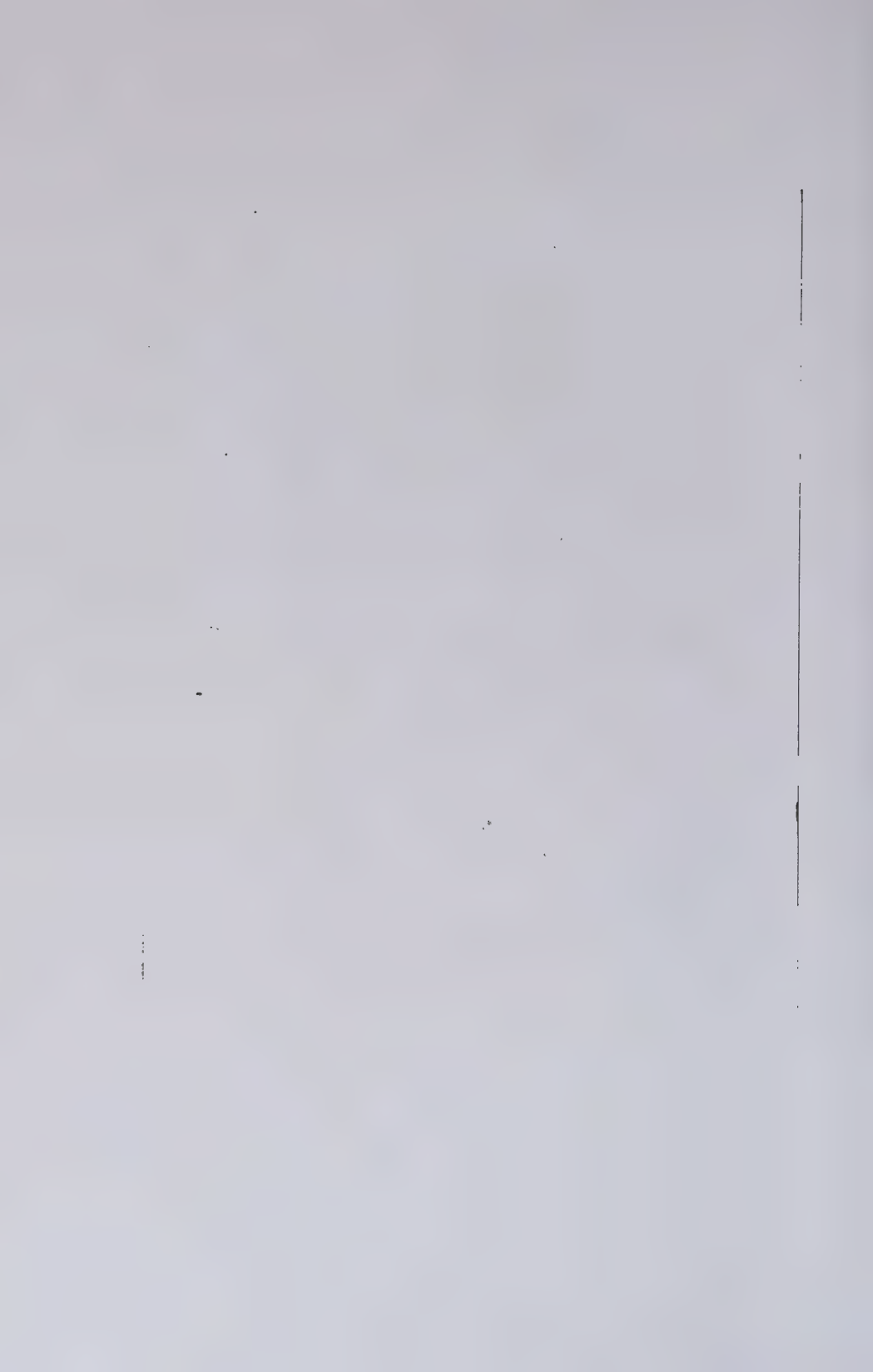
And then, after you have satisfied yourselves as to what is really the import of the Gospel, do not *try* to believe it—I say it advisedly—do not *try* to believe it. There is scarcely a greater hindrance to faith than trying to believe. It would be an insult to me did you say, I will try to believe you ; and it would be no less an insult did I say so to you. To speak of trying to believe a man, implies that you have doubt as to his truthfulness, which doubt, so long as it exists, renders belief impossible. No man ever yet believed by trying. The following, from one now a preacher of the Gospel, is a fair representation of the experience of thousands :—“ Many a time,” says he, “ have I tried to believe at the bidding of a preacher, and felt as if I would give the world to be able to believe ; but though he urged, and I tried, the belief in that way would never come. Had my teacher been wise, he would, instead of urging me to believe, have expounded the Gospel, and shown me that it was

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true. When I was convinced of that, immediately, and without effort, belief came. It is never by direct mental effort that belief is produced; when the truth is apprehended, the belief arises spontaneously in the mind." What we urge, therefore, is not that you would try to believe, but that you would satisfy yourselves that the Gospel is true. You now understand its import; then satisfy yourselves that it is what it professes to be; satisfy yourselves that it is true—a message to you from that God who cannot lie. And when once you are satisfied of this, it will not be necessary that you should try to believe. Without trying to believe, without thinking of believing, faith will spring up, spontaneously, in the mind. Feeling assured of the truth that God loves you, and has given Christ for you, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will take possession of your heart and mind. You will be enabled to pass through life peacefully, and to die calmly, if not triumphantly, simply because you apprehend the meaning, and have ascertained the truth, of "*the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.*"

II.

THE LOVE OF GOD TO THE  
WORLD.



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## II.

### THE LOVE OF GOD TO THE WORLD.

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“ God is love.”

“ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

“ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.”

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It would be vain to look in any language for a sentence to compare with the first of these three. In a merely literary point of view, its brevity, simplicity, grandeur and sublimity, defy comparison. The few which approach to it are found in the same book—the utterances or the dictates of the same Divine Author. In a religious or spiritual point of view, *i. e.* in its influence on the condition and prospects of humanity, it is



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most comprehensive in its import, and most pregnant with mighty influences. There is no one whom it concerns us so much to know, as the Great Being of whom it speaks; nor could anything be more cheering and delightful than the intelligence it communicates.

Suppose, says a celebrated French preacher,\* in a sermon on this text, that of those manuscript rolls which were found amid the buried ruins of Herculaneum, all scorched and blackened by fire; suppose that one of them contained a copy of this Epistle of John, and that it was the only one in existence. "Having reached the 4th chapter and 8th verse, these two words, 'God is,' have been deciphered, and it is not known what follows. What expectation would be excited! That which philosophers have vainly sought, and which the wisest of them have renounced the hope of discovering, a definition of God, is there; and there too, from the hand of God himself. 'God is.' What is he about to say to us, and what is he?

"What is he, that God concealed, 'who dwells in light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen or can see,' whom 'we feel after,' as it were, in the

\* Monod.

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dark? . . . . What is he, that all-powerful God, whose word created everything, and whose word again can extinguish everything; 'in whom we live, move, and have our being;' who holds us each moment under his hand, and who can do as he pleases with our situation, our habitation, and sojourn, our body, and even our soul? What is he, that holy God, whose eyes are too pure to look upon iniquity, whom our consciences convict us of having offended; . . . that just Judge, into whose hands we are soon to fall, it may be to-morrow, or to-day, ignorant of the sentence that awaits us, knowing only that we deserve the worst? What is he? Our repose, our salvation, our eternal destiny, all is there; and I can imagine all the creatures of God bending over that sacred book, in the silent and solemn expectation of what it is about to reveal to the world, touching this question of questions.

"That momentous word which discovers itself is, *love*! Who could desire a better? Could anything like it be conceived by the boldest imagination? That God concealed, that God all-powerful and holy, is love. What want we more? God loves us! What do I say—God love us? Yes, all in God is love. Love is the very

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nature of God"—not merely an attribute of his nature—it *is* his nature, his being, himself. "Whosoever speaks of God, speaks of love. O response, surpassing all our expectations! O blessed revelation, terminating all our anxieties! Glorious pledge of our present, our future, and our eternal felicity!"

This is what it becomes, if we are so persuaded of the truth of this revelation as to put our trust in God,—if we can say with John, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us,"—not otherwise. We are so constituted, that we may "open or close our hearts to the love of God, and thus enjoy or reject that love, which is the treasure of man and the hope of the universe." In order to its enjoyment we must be persuaded of its existence, and its extension to ourselves. In the previous discourse, as you will remember, I attempted to persuade you of this, and I shall continue the attempt now, by giving such an exposition and application of the great subject, as may tend to remove all obstacles to your belief. "Oh, that I may send you away moved, seized, penetrated with this thought, that God is love! Lord, it is true that thou art love,—make it known, by controlling my language by

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thy love, and opening to its influence the hearts of all this people!"

I. We call your attention, in the first place, to the nature of the principle, or, to speak more specifically, to the nature of the Divine love. When it is said, "God is love," what are we to understand by the word? In what sense is he love? It is of great consequence that this question should be correctly answered, as it affects all our ideas of this important subject.

We sometimes employ the term "love," to describe that feeling with which we regard the good qualities or the good conduct of another. If we admire their disposition and character, or if we are pleased with their actions, we say, we love them. In a word, what we call love is, properly, admiration or complacency. Now, it is not in this sense of the term that God is love. He is not admiration everywhere and at all times. He is not complacency. He approves only of those qualities which are truly worthy of approval. He is pleased with his creatures only when they act a part which is truly good. He is angry with the wicked every day. His "wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness

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and unrighteousness of men." In this sense he abhors the workers of iniquity. Even the religious acts which are performed by the impure, are abominable in his sight. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." As regards evil, God is not complacency, but "a consuming fire."

But admiration or complacency is not love, properly so called. Alas! for us if it were! Alas! for us, if the statement, God is love, signified that God was pleased with everything, and approved of everything! We should have no reason to congratulate ourselves on possessing such a revelation then. Alas! for the poor universe, if the God who made and controls it were pleased with evil! How soon it would be over-

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run with anarchy as with a disastrous deluge! How rapidly it would rush towards destruction! Oh! we have reason to bless God that he can be displeased as well as pleased,—that he abhors evil as truly as, and no less than, he approves of good! It affords us some guarantee that evil will not prevail in the universe—that good will ultimately triumph.

Love, then, we say, is not properly complacency or admiration. It is benevolence or good will. It is that feeling or principle which seeks the welfare of other beings, irrespectively of what they are in character, irrespectively, indeed, of any consideration, other than that they are beings susceptible of happiness or misery,—that feeling or principle which, as exhibited by men, you sometimes see devising and labouring for the recovery and salvation of the most degraded, in whom they see nothing amiable, nothing attractive, nothing which they can approve or admire; asking not how a man behaves, or what is his character, before it will consent to do him good; but deeming the very extremity of his wickedness a more urgent reason for attempting his recovery. This feeling is altogether different from complacency. That relates to character; this to person.

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That exists only in view of what it thinks good ; changes into abhorrence in view of what it deems bad. This is cherished in view of sentient being, whether its character be bad or good. It feels for it in spite of such conditions. It is grieved when it is bad, and therefore wretched. It is gratified when it is good, and therefore happy. It pities its woes, and rejoices in its joys.

And this is what is intended when it is said, God is love. It means that God is *benevolence*. While he abhors wrong and approves of right, he is, by virtue of his nature, ever well disposed towards sentient being. He is never hatred or enmity. He is always willing good. His character is such that he ever delights in happiness, and seeks its promotion ; he ever grieves over wretchedness, and seeks its extinction ; and he does this with all the intensity of his infinite nature. More than this we need not say to describe his benevolence ; and had we to say less than this, it would not be true that *God is love*.

II. But if I have rightly explained the nature of the Divine love, it will appear to you, in the second place, that it is necessarily an active principle. True benevolence cannot become inactive.



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except by becoming insensible to the existence of those who are properly its objects. If you can conceive of a benevolent being becoming unconscious of the existence of any being but himself, then you may conceive of his benevolence slumbering within his own bosom. But let other beings be brought to his notice, and immediately his slumbering benevolence becomes active ; it goes forth and encircles with its sympathies every being with whom he is acquainted.

The exercise of our benevolence is circumscribed by our capabilities. Take the most benevolent man that you know—the most benevolent man that lives, if you can find him ; he does not actively love every being, because there are many beings of whose existence he does not know, and there are many more, of whose existence he has heard, who are personally unknown to him. Besides, there are many of those whom he knows well, whom, owing to his limited capabilities, he does not practically love. His mind is not capable of embracing many beings at the same time. And if a large amount of attention is given to one or a few, others are necessarily lost sight of. Proportioned to the intensity of his interest in the few, does he become

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unmindful of others. And thus it is that his love is practically limited,—thus it is that, while actively exercised in relation to some of his fellows, his benevolence has no actual outflowing toward others.

But there is no such limitation in the case of the Divine Being. His natural attributes are not such as to circumscribe the outflow of his benevolence. He knows the existence and history of all creatures. He need not overlook some while he interests himself in others. He can give attention to all at the same time. And hence, if he is benevolent, we expect, nay, we are sure, that his benevolence must actively embrace all beings. If he is *love*, we expect that the sweep of his love will be boundless as his own immensity. As there is no limit within which he is confined, so there is no limit to his love; for he is love. As there is no part of space in which God is not, no being who is not surrounded with his presence, so there is no being, in any part of the universe, whom his love does not embrace. Wherever he is, love is; for he is love. Wherever creatures “live, and move, and have their being in him,” they live, and move, and have their being in love; for he is love. Travel where you may, you can-

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not pass into any region in which his love will not encircle you ; for you cannot go where God is not, and "God is love."

Such is the conclusion at which we naturally arrive, when we have become acquainted with the great truth, that benevolence is the nature of the Divine Being. When we know that "God is love," we cannot—if we reason correctly on the subject—we cannot avoid the conclusion that his love encircles *us*. Accordingly our texts, which describe the object of the Divine love, are in harmony with this conclusion. In the one, indeed, believers only are mentioned, for the Apostle is writing to certain believers, and speaking of the love wherewith God loved them, he says of them, without making any reference to others, "in this was manifested the love of God to us." In the other, however, where he is writing a history designed for the information of all, he places on record a statement which asserts the love of God to all. "For God so loved the world." Now the world, in this passage, embraces every man. You cannot limit it to the good ; for John, distinguishing between it, and those who are of God, describes the "whole world" as lying "in the arms of the wicked one." You cannot confine it

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to the elect or to believers ; for there is distinction made in the passage, between the "world," and "whosoever believeth." You cannot exclude from it so much as one man ; for there is nothing in the passage, as there is nothing in the Divine nature, to justify you in making one single exception. This description of the objects of his love is perfectly in harmony with the foregoing definition of his character. That definition could not be correct were this description less universal than it is. Those who will, may,—but, for my part, I cannot, nor can any one who properly conceives of the Divine—believe that there is partiality or respect of persons with God. I do see an election both in Scripture and in Providence ; I see that some are chosen to privileges which others do not enjoy, and I bow before the inscrutable mystery ; but the fact must never be attributed to any limited benevolence or partiality on the part of the Divine Being. There are reasons for it which I may never be able to comprehend ; but it can never be because God's love was limited. I cannot believe what so pointedly contradicts the Scripture declaration.—"There is no respect of persons with him." I cannot hold anything so much at variance with the great truth that "God is

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love." I cannot admit what is so derogatory to, and so inconsistent with, his Divinity. Partiality is imperfection. Respect of persons is the result of creature weakness. Attribute it to God, and, instead of his thoughts and ways being higher than ours, as the heavens are high above the earth, you make it appear that he is such an one as yourselves. And I say again, I cannot believe in that which would undeify the Almighty, and bring him down to a level with his creatures. I thank God, therefore, for a declaration so explicit as this,—a declaration which tells me so plainly—what from the benevolence of his nature I had been led to infer—that there is not one of you, yea, that there is not, on the face of the earth, one poor sinner, who is not folded in the embrace of God's boundless love.

Say not, my hearers, that a love which embraces so many, can be of little advantage to you. O say not, that because it is so extended it must needs be very weak. Make not the finite the standard of the infinite. Remember, God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than ours. Were he such an one as yourself, there would, no doubt, be reason for your complaint. Our natures are such, that our love, if it is to be influential at all,

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must be practically confined to a few. While it is our duty to extend our benevolent desires to all creatures who are presented to our notice; as regards the outgoing of our love—its practical expression, it is less intense in proportion as it is more extensive; as its objects are multiplied, our affection for each is smaller in degree.' Hence it has become almost proverbial, that those who aspire to be the friends of mankind at large, prove but poor friends to that portion of mankind to which they are most intimately related. But there is no such necessity in relation to the Infinite mind. The multiplication of the objects of his love does not diminish the amount of his affection for each. Think how he cares for his myriad creatures, from the least to the greatest. He feeds the raven; he adorns the lily; he notes the sparrow's fall. Descend lower still—to the insects which flutter in the sunbeam, and even to the animalculæ which the microscope reveals. Thousands of them can frisk about—so small are they—in a single drop of water; and yet they are all the objects of his care. He feeds them; he ordains their movements; he determines the time and the manner of their death. Then look at the distant worlds which the telescope discovers. His

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hand upholds them ; he regulates their motions ; he supports their teeming populations. And from the animalculæ to the star,—from the universe poised in a point, to the universe which peoples space,—not one is neglected or overlooked, there is not one for which he does not kindly care. Surely, the love of such a Being is worth something to thee, though it be shared by multitudes beside thyself. Surely, he can love *all* his creatures, however numerous, and yet love each of them—love thee, poor sinner, with a love as great as if extended to thee alone.

Say not either, that your sinfulness must turn away God's love from you. Again, I caution you, beware of judging God by yourselves, and of casting the shadow of your imperfections on the All-perfect One. We are so imperfect that, though it does not properly relate to character, but to being, we are apt, in the exercise of our limited benevolence, to confound being and character. When we regard a man's condition with indignation, we sometimes extend our indignation to his person, and refuse to pity him because he is unworthy of our respect. But you must not attribute a procedure which displays such imperfection, to the Divine Being. There is no imper-



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fection in him. Infinitely wise, he cannot confound the person and the character, or extend to the one, the hatred which is excited by the other. The wickedness of his creatures does not change his nature. He does not become malevolent because they are sinful. There is no malevolence in his nature. He is love—everywhere and always, love. I know not how much he abhors your character,—I know not how much he loathes your sin,—I cannot know, because a creature cannot comprehend the emotions of the Infinite Mind; but this I know, that, however much he abhors your character, you are personally the object of his love. Under all the loathsomeness of your character—entangled in the evil habits you have acquired—writhing under the wretchedness you have brought upon yourself, or torpid beneath the burden of your guilt—he sees the poor soul which is his offspring; and he pities it. Ay, and would you only look to him, his abhorrence of your character would not prevent him from coming to your help. He would stretch forth his hand and pluck you from the guilt and pollution which are so hateful in his sight. He would lift you out of the mire and the horrible pit of your sinfulness. He would wash you in the

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blood of his own Son, clothe you with a robe of spotless purity, adorn you with all the beauty of holiness, and, finally, take you to be with himself, that you might shine for ever as a gem in his crown.

But why insist so much on the love of God to the world? Ah! do you need to ask why? Know you not how much need there is that this truth should be written on the world's heart? Know you not that its ignorance or unbelief of this truth is the cause of all its woe? Here is the source of all its wickedness and wretchedness. It is a ruined world, because it has lost its faith in God. This is why it goes groaning through the ages, with a tear in its eye, and a load of anguish at its heart, like a child bereaved of its parent, knowing no rest, and doomed never to know it, until it have faith in God again. This, my hearers, is your own ruin. You have no peace of mind because you have no faith in God's love. You are afraid to trust the Infinite Father. You cannot confide in the present friendship of the God with whom you have to do. And never can you find rest for your soul until you know and believe the love that God has to you. Unless we can convince you of this, all our preaching is vain. Until you are assured

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of the friendship of the Most High, you are like the dove on the troubled waste of waters, with darkness overhead, and tempest all around, and no resting-place for your weary spirit. Oh, could we but write this truth on your heart—could we but burn it into your consciousness—could we but produce the indelible conviction that God loves you, then would you cease from your restlessness. When you could look up to the Infinite and say, My Father,—what a holy calm, as if from the wings of some pitying angel, would descend to soothe and succeed your feverish agitation! What an ark of refuge would his love afford for your storm-tossed and restless soul! How you would take shelter in that love when danger threatened, as a child runs into its mother's arms, and, nestling there, would look out, with serene eye, on the frowning heavens and the troubled waters, fearing not the fury of the storm, feeling yourself borne safely, by omnipotent love, through darkness, and tempest, and storm, to your Father's house on high. Then would you have sunshine to brighten the darkest hour of your existence. Then would you have peace in all your tribulation, and joy in all your sorrow.

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" Then the night would be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Would fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away."

III. But I pass on to observe, in the third place, that this love is influential. It not only goes forth to embrace being, as such, but it has been expressed in a most remarkable manner, by most costly gift and amazing condescension. Its manifestation, as described in our texts, is such as we might expect from what has been said of its nature. If *God is love*—if that Infinite Being is love—if love is his nature—we can conceive of no gift too great for it to give; we cannot mention anything, and then say of it, it is too great for infinite love to bestow, for we cannot measure the infinite. And, accordingly, its manifestation, as described here, is worthy of itself.

You observe, John does not point us to creation or providence, when he says, " In this was manifested the love of God to us." He makes no mention of these. Not that there is no goodness in them. Not that they are not manifestations of love. It were easy to find in them many proofs of goodness. God's works and dealings with you, could we trace them, would furnish

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many indications of God's love to you. Were we inclined to enumerate them, we might speak of the changing seasons; of the grateful vicissitude of day and night; of the elements, so skilfully adapted in their component parts to the necessities of vegetable and animal life; of the atmosphere, so exhilarating in its influence, wafting to us the melodious strains of music, and the fragrance of ten thousand flowers; of the grandeur with which the heavens are garnished, and the beauty which enamels the earth; of the sun, flooding the world with gladness, the fructifying showers, and the fruit with which nature ministers to the wants of man: we might speak to you of all these, and find in them all, proofs of love. We might speak, too, of the pleasures of friendship; of the happiness which flows from reciprocal affection, and the endearing intercourse of domestic life. We might speak of our frames, so wonderfully made,—“the eye, in whose small orb is pencilled the whole of heaven and earth . . . the ear, in whose vocal chambers are entertained harmonious numbers, with all the sweetness that resideth in the tongue of man; the beating heart, flooding all the recesses of our being with the tide of life; the cunning of the hand, converting

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the raw material into forms of beauty or ministers of service." \* And, above all, we might speak of the higher faculties of the human soul, in virtue of which it sways sceptre over Nature, and, as her lord, levies from her wide domains such tribute as ministers to his happiness. We might speak of these and other things, and find in them all, no slight proofs of God's love to you. And it is not because he does not deem them indications of love, that John makes no mention of them when he says, "In this was manifested the love of God to us;" but because he has to point us to a manifestation brighter and diviner far. Were he simply noticing the various things in which the love of God might be seen, he would make mention of the works, both of nature and providence; but he is pointing out the highest manifestation, he is telling us in what the love of God has been pre-eminently displayed. When he says,—"*In this was manifested,*" he means in *this* emphatically, in this above all other things; and in doing so he points us neither to nature nor to providence, for he has a higher manifestation than either. "*In this,*"—not in nature, not in providence; God's love

\* Irving,

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to you does not reach its climax there ;—" In *this* was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Nature, sublime and beautiful as it is, richly strewn as it is with fruits and tokens of goodness, is not the measure of God's love to you. Providence, kind and wise as it is, often as you have had proofs of its paternal care, is not the measure of God's love to you. He has loved you more than either nature or providence shows : " for God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son."

Here, then, my hearers, is the measure—the manifestation of God's love to you. Look at it, and try to comprehend it. Oh, what a depth of meaning is there in that little word "*so!*" God *so* loved you. How much does he love you ? To what an extent has his love been exercised on your behalf ? So much that he has given for your ransom a man like yourself ? That would have displayed great love towards one so unworthy and rebellious ; but he has loved you more than that. So much that he has sent an angel to suffer for you ? That would have been surprising condescension, on the part of a Being so exalted, towards a creature so vile. But he



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has loved you far more than that ; yea, far more than if he had given a thousand angels for your ransom. He so loved you as to give you his greatest gift, his unspeakable gift. He so loved you as to give his Son—who was his equal, his fellow, one with himself—and that was equivalent to giving himself for you ! And must it not be an infinite love which led him to give himself ? Oh ! what greater gift could he have given ? What manifestation of love could surpass this, that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him !

It must be remembered, that though the feelings with which God regards Christ, are not precisely those with which a parent regards his child, nor the feelings with which he delivered him up to death, precisely those with which a parent would consign to death a well-beloved child, yet they resemble these more than any other. No feeling of which we are susceptible would represent them so well. The only difference is, that his are infinitely stronger. The death of Christ cost him infinitely more than a parent could suffer at the death of his child. Let this be understood, and the gift of Christ appears the greatest which could possibly be given. What

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will a parent not part with, rather than with an only and well-beloved child? Ye mothers, I speak to you—to the maternal heart which throbs within you—I summon you as witnesses to the strength of the divine love. Tell me, as ye clasp your babe to your breast; as it nestles in your arms; as ye gaze into its calm, loving eyes; as ye feel its soft tiny hand stroking your cheek or clasping your neck, it cooing the while like a dove in its warm nest;—tell me, what would you not give to screen that little one from suffering and death; to protect it from a beast of prey; to rescue it from a burning house—your babe; your darling babe; your innocent, helpless babe;—what would you not give, to snatch it from such a fate? I tell you what you would give—by all the maternal affection which I have seen lavished on children I tell you—you would give the 'last drop of your heart's blood. And that, my hearers, is the affection which God employs to indicate the strength of his love for you. That strongest earthly love but faintly shadows forth the great love where-with God has loved you. The sacrifice which he has made for you, has cost him more than it would cost the mother to part with her

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child. And yet you do not believe that God loves you! Wonder, O heavens! at this; and be astonished, O earth! Here are men and women for whom God has given his Son to die, and they dare not, or will not, believe that God loves them now!

The question will occur to you, Why was it needful that God should send his Son? For what purpose was Christ given? The text answers, "that we might have life;" "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John, iii. 16.) That love of which we have been speaking, felt for us in our sinfulness, and was willing to bless us. But, somehow or other—we need not at present attempt to explain how—sin, while unatoned for, prevented the communication of its blessings. There was a gulf, so to speak, between us, and the blessings which the Divine love was willing to bestow. That gulf could only be bridged over, or done away with, by the fearful sufferings and ignominious death of God's well-beloved Son. Then, what is to be done? Must that love be for ever restrained? Must we be for ever separated from the blessings which it is willing to bestow? What, if God's love should solve the difficulty?

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What, if it should prove great enough to deliver up him who is infinitely more precious to it than all other blessings combined? Who, after that, could suppose that any other blessing would be withheld? And that is what God's love has done. It has sent Christ into the world. He has suffered and died, so spanning the gulf which separated you from the blessings necessary to your present and everlasting life, and rendering those blessings accessible. And, think you, will that love which did not refuse to give Christ for you, withhold from you any of the blessings which Christ has placed within your reach? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The gift of Christ is the greatest gift of all, and the pledge of every other. The love which gave you that, will refuse you nothing which your happiness requires. And it is my mission to tell you—as I have been showing you in this discourse, and would tell you again, though it were my last message—that God has cherished and magnified this love for you. He "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son."

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But there are certain objections, which may prevent your reception of this great truth, which ought to be glanced at ere we close.

You ask, How is it possible that God can love me, when I have to endure so many trials? Is not the suffering which I am doomed to endure inconsistent with the statement, that "God is love," or, at least with the doctrine, that his love embraces me? In reply to this, I would ask you, Have you never seen in a family, in which the law of kindness reigned, some member chastised because of his disobedience? You did not, in that case, deem the chastisement of the disobedient child inconsistent with the father's love; you reckoned it a proof of love rather than otherwise. And is there not enough of rebellious feeling in your own heart, to account for all the suffering to which you have been subjected, without leading you to question the love of God towards you? Your sufferings are but the chastisement, by which the kind Father seeks to drive you from your sin; and viewed in this light, so far from being inconsistent with, they are the allotment of love. Painful as they are in themselves, they are all merciful in their design. They are sent to caution you against the commission of sin

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—to arrest you in, and, haply, to turn you from the path that leads to perdition—to raise you from your moral degradation, and to promote in you that holiness of character with which your happiness is identified. Many have had to say before now—just a few days ago I heard a strong man say, as the tears streamed down his cheek—“I have to thank God that I have been afflicted;” and so would it be with us all were we rightly affected by the suffering which we see and feel. You have sometimes seen the thunder-cloud spread over the horizon, and darken all the sky, —how portentous of evil it seemed! How threatening its aspect! But you have also seen that cloud descend in crystal showers which refreshed and fertilized the thirsty land. Just so would it be with your troubles, were you rightly exercised thereby. Dark and frowning as they are, let them drive you to seek refuge in your Father’s love, and they will pass away, leaving only showers of blessing. As you walk abroad in the fields, you see the flowers blooming in their beauty, and you know that the light and heat of the sun were required to produce them. But you do not always remember, that the thunder-cloud, and the devastating lightning, and the storm

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which sweeps o'er the earth, and the earthquake which rocks it to its centre, and the fiery torrent of the volcano, had their share in producing them too. Even so, trouble, as well as enjoyment, is designed to produce holiness of character. By pain, God would purge you from the dross of base passion that is in you. Your sorrow, he would make the inverted image of your nobleness. By the depth of sadness to which you are sunk, he shadows forth the height of glory to which you might rise. He would give you reason to say, as others have said before, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. God's goodness has been displayed in my trials as well as my pleasures. In adversity, as in prosperity, he hath done all things well."

But, you say, there is something still more difficult to reconcile with God's love, than the sufferings which men endure in this world,—there is the existence of a hell;—how can that possibly harmonize with the statement that "God is love," and that his benevolence embraces all men? In reply to this, let me return to the



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illustration already employed. You can conceive of a son, in such a family as we described, becoming so bad, that his presence would be a curse to all the members. His character might exert a polluting influence on theirs, and the outbreak of his violent temper might endanger their lives. And thus his father, though he loved him, might be constrained to banish him from his home, and to make the banishment eternal, in case of his refusing to reform. He loves his son, and it grieves him to cast him out; but he also loves the other members of his family, and he cannot sacrifice their well-being out of fondness for him; and still less can he do so when the son would not be benefited by it—when he would only destroy their happiness without being made happier himself. Thus, while the father loves his son, and mourns over his wretchedness, he is constrained to cut him off. And so it is with our God, and sinners whom he loves. Their character is so bad that they, necessarily, exert a polluting and injurious influence; and were they admitted to heaven as they are, they would cast a blight over all its enjoyments. Its holy inhabitants would shrink from their approach, or be defiled by their touch. There would be war in heaven again, or the

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heavenly hosts, panic-stricken, would utter shrieks of dismay over their desolated home and blasted enjoyments. But it cannot be. A God of love will prevent such an outrage on the interests of his holy creatures. He loves the impenitent, and is loath to cast them off; but he loves the others also, and he will not allow their happiness to be destroyed by the admission to heaven of those who are unholy. The presence of the unholy would be injurious to the holy, while it would not benefit themselves, and hence God banishes them for ever from his holy universe, and consigns them to the prison-house prepared for spirits like themselves, where their angry passions, wrought into a tempest, will rage with uncontrolled fury; and, preying upon themselves, and exciting their hostility to each other, will give them to realise in their bitter experience the chief elements of that misery which the Scriptures describe by the gnawing of the undying worm, and the scorching of the unquenchable fire. This is substantially what is done when they are cast into hell. And it were difficult to find in that anything inconsistent with love.

You think it awful, and irreconcilable with love, that there should be a hell; and awful it

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certainly is. But how much more awful it would be, were there more than one, were there many hells, yea, were the universe to become one vast hell, as it could not fail to become were God to place the mark of his approbation on sin, by admitting impenitent sinners to heaven, and exposing the redeemed to their polluting influence! His holy creatures, losing that faith in God which is their best preservative against sin, and having constantly before them the example, and constantly around them the influence, of transgressors, would soon become involved in their rebellion; and so the universe, with all it contains, would rush rapidly to destruction. This is what might be expected to take place were there no hell! O horror! to think of the tide of rebellion rolling over the universe of being, and ever rising, rising over one order of creatures after another, until it dashes its waves against the very pillars of the eternal throne! O horror! to think of the worlds—the workmanship of God—on which he has left the traces of his love, and power, and skill—like a blazing fleet with a felon crew, rushing down the steep of night into endless destruction! When I think of this, awful as is the thought of a hell, I

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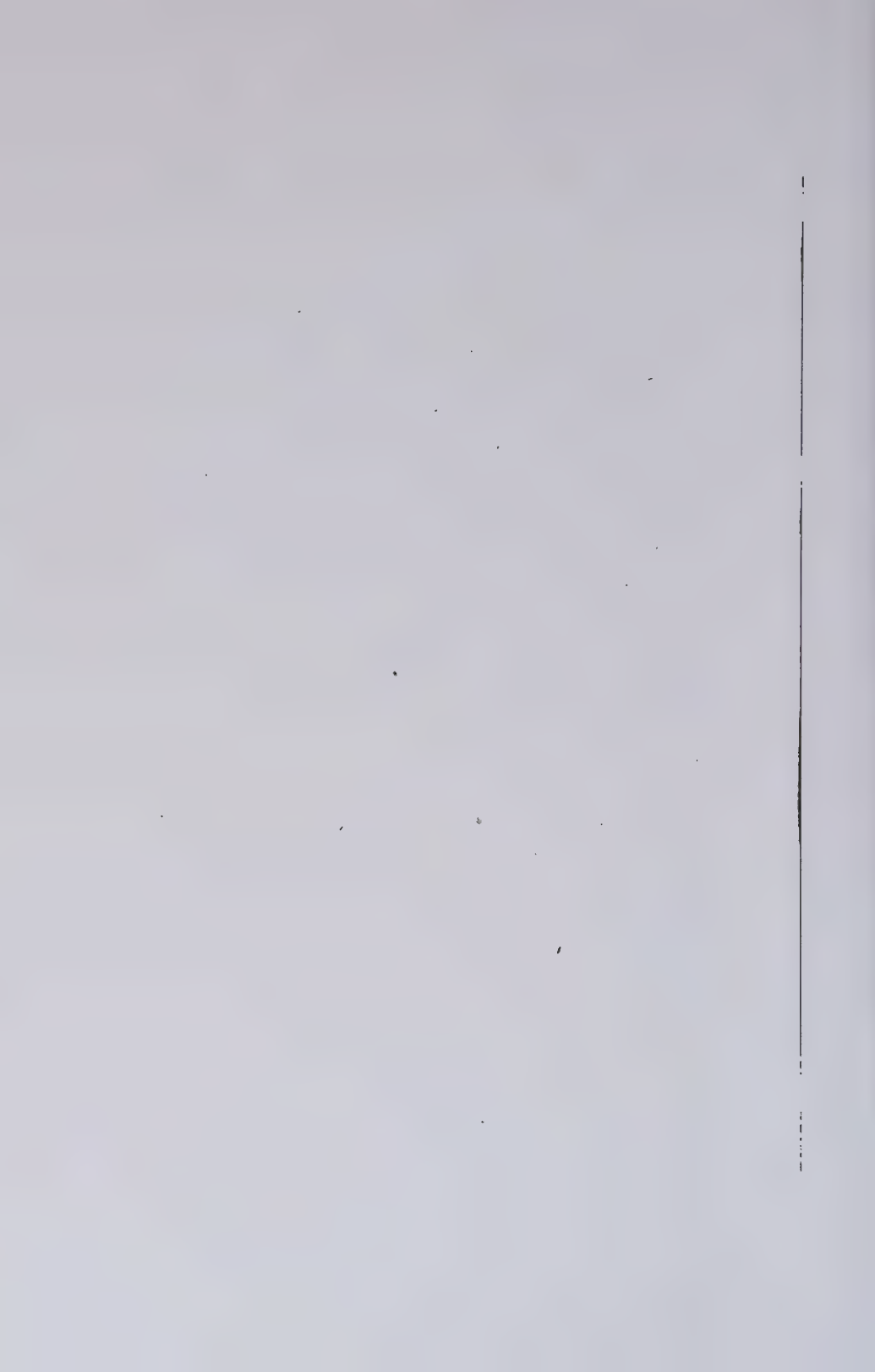
see reason to thank God that there is only one. I see that it is not only consistent with the love of God, but what his love might lead us to expect, that he should consign all who will not repent to that one, and thus preserve his holy universe perfectly free from the slightest taint of sin, and gloriously free from the slightest pang of sorrow.

Thus my hearers, are the most formidable objections to your belief in God's love capable of being obviated. And now I would ask you, in conclusion, how will you treat this love? Will you believe in its existence, and yield yourselves to its influence? Will you commit yourselves to it, that it may bear you onward to the heaven which it has provided for you? Or will you distrust it, after all that it has done, and so steeling your hearts against its influence, and depriving yourself of its blessings, constrain it, however reluctantly, to consign you to perdition? It is for you to determine which it shall be. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways."



### III.

## GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.





### III.

#### GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

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"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

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THE Apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Christians at Corinth, thanks God for his unspeakable gift; and though the name of Christ is not mentioned, there can be no doubt that he is the gift intended. The Apostle's mind was full of his Master. He occupied the most of his thoughts. He was supreme in his affections. And in accordance with a well-known law, his mind is ever ready, when opportunity presents, to glance from other subjects, to that which was most familiar and dear. He is acknowledging

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the contributions of the Corinthians for the poor saints in Judea, and intimating that the receivers would glorify God on behalf of the givers; and referring to their gifts, he naturally thinks of the greater gift of God, through which the grace of liberality, and all other graces, are communicated, and after his usual manner breaks out into an abrupt exclamation of adoring gratitude, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Assuming, then, as we may, without argument, that the gift is Christ, we proceed to expound and enforce the great truth which is thus presented to our notice.

When its import is understood, it is a marvellous proposition which we submit to you, when we say, that *Jesus Christ is the gift of God*. Marvellous, because contrasting so much with man's ordinary transactions. Few men are in the habit of giving, spontaneously, to those who have no claim upon them, and are likely to yield them no return. If they give at all, it is, generally, in consequence of favours received, or as the price of favours desired. Even the gifts which are drawn forth by earnest solicitation, are, for the most part, very insignificant in value. And where offence has been given, the offended party,

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instead of conferring any boon on the offender, is more apt to consider how he shall avenge himself for the injuries received. Accordingly, were we to reason from the human to the divine—were we, from man's dealings with man, to judge beforehand of God's procedure in relation to ourselves, we should expect no gifts, but only manifestations of vengeance,—no favours, but only inflictions of wrath. But how unlike our inference, to the fact which we have announced! We have grievously offended God. The faculties with which he endowed us we have prostituted to unholy purposes. The affection which he claimed from us we have lavished upon ourselves. His image impressed upon us has been defaced. And the strength he has given us has been spent in rebellion against himself. Though he made, and has sustained us, he has received from us ingratitude and insult; and by thought and feeling, and word and act, have we provoked him to anger ten thousand times. And yet, when he comes forth to deal with us, it is not to inflict vengeance, it is not that he may crush us beneath the load of his anger; but to give us, not merely the bounties of providence and the fruits of the earth, not merely prolonged life and health, not merely temporal

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comforts, not merely food for the body and instruction for the mind—though he does give us all these—but to give us his greatest, his unspeakable gift—the gift of his well-beloved Son. We should have looked for wrath, and we are treated as the objects of his manifold mercy. We should have expected the withdrawal of every favour, and hopeless consignment to perdition, and lo, God sends his Son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life. He gives his only-begotten Son to suffer, that we might not suffer, to die, that we might not die. His Son, a ransom for his enemies. His well-beloved, who dwelt in his bosom from eternity, to endure the curse, in the room of those who were rebels against himself. Oh, the length and the breadth, and the depth and the height, of the love of God! Verily his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.

But, marvellous as our proposition is, its announcement excites in you neither prejudice nor surprise. You receive it quite as a matter of course. How is this? Is it that you have formed such a conception of God's character as

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would have led you to anticipate the fact? Is it that you think of him in a manner worthy of himself, so that the most amazing displays of goodness, on his part, cannot surprise you? Not so, we fear. For when you are closely examined, it is found that, as regards benevolence, God is, in your estimation, very much like yourselves. The explanation is rather that you receive it only as a matter of course. You do not consider its wondrous import. You read it in "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son;" in, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" you have drunk it in almost with the nutriment of your infancy; you have been trained to regard it as an unquestionable truth; you have heard religious people speak of it as a doctrine which they all receive, and for your own part you have never ventured to question it; and now that you hear it formally stated, instead of exciting your wonder or opposition, it meets with your ready assent. But while you assent to it theoretically, you may, nevertheless, demur to it in practice. Though you would not say, Christ is not the gift of God; you may act as if Christ were not the gift of God. It is a very different thing, as you are aware, to

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admit that such and such words are true, from what it is to receive and act upon the truth which these words convey. When we say, God has given Christ, you assent to our statement; and yet you cannot say that Christ is yours, and you fancy that he cannot become yours, until you have performed some good work, or acquired some meritorious qualification. You imagine that you must have some better authority for claiming him as your own, than the statement that God has given him; and you look for that better authority in the evidence of a work of grace within you, or in some good deed which you have done. It is true, this is not what you say; nor is it the view which you take of your own procedure: but it is what you mean, nevertheless; for your conduct admits of no other interpretation. You cannot call Christ yours now, while you have God's word telling you that he is given; but you hope to be able to do so after you have attended more to the duties of religion, and are more conscious that God's Spirit has been at work in your soul: and is not that a proof that you consider your own feelings and deeds better authority for calling Christ yours, than God's testimony that he has given him?

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In order that we may lead you to that appropriation of Christ which we are anxious to promote, it may be necessary to advance proof that he has been given for you. Ignorance of this, more than any other thing, prevents many from receiving him. They believe that God has given Christ; but they cannot say that Christ is theirs, because they do not know that he has been given for them. Without this knowledge, the appropriation cannot take place. It is not enough for you to know that Christ has been given, you must know further that the gift is for *you*. But how may such knowledge be obtained? From what source may it be derived? Certainly not from any passage of Scripture which singles you out as individuals, and tells you that Christ has been given for you, for no such passage exists; but from those passages which are so comprehensive that they embrace all, and therefore you. Of these, happily, there is no lack. One of the most conclusive has already been quoted,—and its examination may suffice for our present purpose: —“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Here the gift of Christ is presented as the proof



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and the measure of God's love to the world. But that gift is not the proof of God's love to any, but those for whom it was given. The Saviour could not have pointed it out as a proof of God's love for any man, unless the gift was for him. Were I to give something to a few men in any company, it would be absurd for me to speak of the gift to a few, as a proof of my love to all; it would only manifest my love to the few to whom it was given. And if Christ has only been given for a few in the world, the gift cannot be regarded as a proof of God's love to the world. It is, at best, a manifestation of his love to the favoured few; and for aught that it says, the others may be all the objects of his hatred. But when the Saviour holds it up as the proof and the measure of God's love to the world, it is certain that the gift is for the world, — that as all the world are the objects of God's love, so the gift of Christ is to all the world.

There is a phrase frequently used by hearers of the Gospel who are concerned about their spiritual condition, to which we fear no very definite meaning is attached by the parties themselves. Again and again have we been asked by inquirers, How shall I know that I have "an interest in Christ?" The question is of the first importance, as without an

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interest in Christ there is no salvation for sinners. But before we attempt to answer it, we must ask, What do you mean by an interest in Christ? If you mean, how can you know that you are believing in Christ, that you have embraced Christ; our answer is, that such knowledge is not attainable in your present condition. Your asking that question as you do, shows too plainly that you are not believing, and you cannot know the existence of that which does not exist, in fact. To conclude that you are believing when you are not, would tend little to your advantage. Your comforting knowledge would be, in fact, ruinous self-deception. Besides, it is of small consequence for you to know that you are believing; such knowledge is not necessary as your warrant for claiming Christ as yours.

But if, by having "an interest in Christ," you mean, that which the phrase most naturally signifies, that Christ has been given for you, and has come into the world that he might be your Saviour; we have the best possible ground for assuring you that you *have* an interest in Christ. We give you the testimony of God to that effect. We point you to that word "world," where it is used in such a manner, and in such a connexion, that it

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must embrace every man ; and if that word takes you in, if it must necessarily include you, if you cannot by any means place yourselves beyond its limits, if there be room for you within its universal embrace, we have the authority of God for telling you, that Christ has been given for you. He who was best acquainted with this subject, and best qualified to speak on it, tells you that God loves you, and that the measure of his love to you is the gift of his Son ; and we know not how the Scriptures could tell you more plainly that you have an interest in Christ, or what better warrant you could have for now appropriating Christ, and humbly, yet confidently, and thankfully, saying, Christ is mine. You would ask no better warrant for laying claim to an earthly estate. Even human testimony would be deemed sufficient for that purpose. Were an honest man to testify before competent witnesses, that he had made over any part of his possessions to you, you would not hesitate to say that you had an interest in, and to assert your claim to, the property so transferred. And when God testifies that he has given Christ for you, why should you doubt that you have an interest in him ? Why should you hesitate to say, " Christ is mine ? " " If we

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receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."

It may be, that you are kept from making this appropriation by impressions which have been produced on your mind, and notions which you have entertained, arising out of the conditional nature of salvation. You know that men cannot be saved unless they comply with certain conditions; and from a misapprehension of what these are, and to what they relate, you seek to know if you have complied with the conditions, ere you will receive God's testimony, and regard Christ as yours. Now while we would guard against producing the impression that there are no conditions, and thus giving countenance to a licentious universalism, and wrapping you in a false security which the approach of death would destroy, there is also a danger, against which we need to be equally watchful, of altering the nature and the relation of the conditions, and thus obscuring the Gospel of the grace of God. It is true that you can only be saved through certain conditions, which the Bible specifies; but it is also true that the gift of Christ is not conditional. God does not say, "I will give you Christ, if you do so and so; I will give you Christ, if you become so and so;"

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but, "I have given you Christ." "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." The deed is done, the gift is given already, and is not contingent on anything in you. Whatever may have been your past conduct—whatever may be your present character—whatever your future course, God *has given* his Son. Your doings can never render his word untrue, or undo what he has done. The gift of Christ is no contingency, but a fact which has taken place once for all, and all the conditions in the case relate to your enjoyment of it. Nor are these so numerous or so difficult as men sometimes suppose. Indeed, there is only one; and in the nature of things that one is indispensable. God has given you Christ, and in order to enjoy, you have only to receive, the gift. Observe the distinction: your enjoyment of Christ is conditional, the gift of Christ is not so. And while we would urge you to comply with the condition, we caution you to beware of introducing it where it is not required, and thus placing a stumbling-block in your own way. The sole condition is, that you appropriate the gift in order to its enjoyment; and you may do so now. Nothing is requisite to qualify you for that. You need no other warrant than God's testimony for

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regarding Christ as yours. What other warrant could possibly compare with the word of a truth-speaking God? What can give you a stronger assurance than that God has said it? O, that is a word which cannot fail! And holding fast by that, you will have the strong conviction, which such a word affords, that to all the blessings which Christ provides, God has given you a claim, and an interest in all that he has done.

Do you say you are so unworthy, it would be presumptuous in you to make such an appropriation? Then we beg to remind you that Christ is not the reward of creature merit, but the gift of God's grace. It is not your worthiness, but God's word, which must determine whether or not he has been given for you. If he does not say that he has given you Christ, though you were the holiest man on earth, it would be presumption in you to say, "Christ is mine." But if God says that he is given, though you were the worst sinner that lives, you are only taking God at his word when you say, "It is true, Christ is mine;"—and there is no presumption in that. On the contrary, to treat God's word as untrue, because you think the gift too great to be conferred on one so wicked and so worthless,—that is presumption,

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that is an insult to the God of truth. Depend upon it, for such a procedure there can be no excuse. Your unworthiness to receive a gift, can never falsify God's testimony that it has been given. Your estimate of what is likely, is not the standard by which his word is to be tried. His thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are his ways your ways. The greatness of the grace may well awaken your wonder; but it should never be met by your unbelief. When he says he has given Christ for you, every incredulous feeling should be crushed, and, notwithstanding your own unworthiness and sinfulness, should you cleave to his testimony, and on its sole authority say, without misgiving and without fear, "Christ is mine."

Careful as we have been to guard against the charge of giving countenance to the dogma of universal salvation, you may be ready to say at this stage of the argument, "If Christ has been given to the world, to unbelievers as well as believers, men will be saved whether they believe or not." If so, we beg to remind you of the distinction we were careful to draw between the enjoyment and the gift—that the one is conditional, though the other is not. Christ is not



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enjoyed by all to whom he is given, but only by those who, through faith, receive him. While the Scriptures testify that he is given to all, they never say that he is possessed by all. Many of those to whom he is given, reject the gift; and so far from issuing in their salvation, it becomes the occasion of their aggravated punishment. As a millstone about their neck, it sinks them deeper in perdition. They have manifested greater guilt in rejecting Christ, than they could have manifested had he never been given. They have spurned from them God's best boon. They have contemned God's greatest work. They have despised the brightest manifestation of his love. They have made light of the condescension and suffering of his well-beloved Son. And "if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,"—if "the angels which kept not their first estate," are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day,"—if Adam by his one offence became liable to be cast into perdition,—if the heathen who sin without a revelation, perish without a revelation,—if "he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three wit-

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nesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him who hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

There must be the reception, as well as the gift of Christ, in order to salvation. You cannot reach forth your hand and take him, as in the case of an earthly gift; and that is not required. But there must be the exercise of mind which most resembles that. The mind must do what the hand cannot. Your thoughts and feelings must be such, as when believing the testimony of a friend, you stretch forth your hand to receive the gift which he bestows. There must be a closing of the heart with Christ. To the testimony that God has given him, your heart must cleave. On that testimony it must rest. To that testimony it must respond, saying, "It is true, God has given me Christ,—Christ is mine." You must treat it as you treat the word of a friend in whose truth-

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fulness you have confidence, and solely on its authority you must henceforth regard Christ as yours. Be not deterred from this appropriation, because you have not the good feelings by which the reception of Christ is accompanied. These always come after the reception—never before it. They are the consequences of, not the preparation for, faith. Only receive God's testimony, and regard Christ as yours, and your souls will be filled with those feelings to which you are now strangers. When you can look up to Christ and all the blessings treasured up in him, and say, "He is mine,—they are mine,"—gratitude to God for his unspeakable gift will become your prevailing feeling. That gratitude will be accompanied by sorrow over your past offences, by zeal for God's glory, and all the feelings by which Christians are distinguished. Whereas, if you shrink from regarding him as yours, until you possess those feelings, you remain in a state of unbelief, and so deprive yourselves of those very feelings which you wish to experience. It is as if you would not plant the tree, until you were sure of having reaped the fruit, and thus deprive yourself of the very fruit which you are so anxious to reap. Your feelings, as we have previously stated, can-

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not affect the truth of God's testimony. That is true, whatever may be the nature of your feelings. And though there be not one good feeling in your soul, it is your right and your duty to give it credence now, and, solely because God says so, to conclude that Christ is given to you, and that, therefore, you may call him yours.

These remarks may call up in your minds a fresh difficulty; but they also prepare the way for its removal. We have said that your duty is to believe, whatever may be your feelings; but knowing as you do that those who have received Christ are distinguished by certain feelings, you ask, "How can I believe that I have received him, when I cannot discover any of those feelings in myself? Would not such a belief be a dangerous delusion?" Our reply is, We know you have none of the feelings which accompany the reception of Christ, and that, consequently, you have no right to believe that you have already received him; for in that case you would only be believing a lie. You have not received him, and we do not wish you to believe that you have; what we wish you to believe is, that God has given him. Did we wish you to believe that you have received Christ, we should point you for evidence to your

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own feelings ; but because we wish you to believe that God has given him, we point you for evidence, away from your own feelings, to God's word. To try to believe that you have received him, is to prevent the reception taking place. It is to make your faith rest upon yourself, instead of Christ. It is to believe in your own belief, instead of believing in God's word. It is to make the act of faith, its object ; and by keeping the mind occupied with the act, to prevent the exercise of faith on that which properly is its object. You are commanded to believe God's word, and instead of doing so, you try to believe that you have believed, and are disconsolate because your feelings testify that you have not. What an egregious mistake ! What a lamentable infatuation ! Fancy an Israelite, at the point of death, being directed to look to the serpent of brass for healing, and, instead of obeying the command, examining his wounds, to ascertain if he had looked, and was being healed, and then becoming despondent because the state of his disease shows that he has not ; and, absurd as his conduct appears, you have in him a fair representation of your own case. His duty, as a dying man, is not to examine his wounds, but to look at once to

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the healing object which God has provided. And your business, as a sinner exposed to wrath, is not to inquire if you have already believed, but at once to believe the testimony which God has given you. Settle it, as a certainty, that you have not received Christ,—that you have none of the feelings which accompany the reception of Christ; still, here is the message, telling you that God has given him, and it is your duty to give it credence now. Believing the testimony that God has given him to you, you have the strong assurance, which a message from God affords, that Christ is yours. In order to that assurance, you need no other evidence than God's word. Without inquiring whether you have received him or not,—without thinking at all of the act of receiving him, you know that he is yours, simply because God tells you that he has given him for you. You can have no better authority than God's word; nothing can impart a stronger assurance than a "Thus saith the Lord." Taking your stand on that ground, you may defy earth and hell to shake your confidence. It cannot possibly prove unfounded, for God will not deny himself. Your assurance will, no doubt, be followed by feelings of peace, and joy, and

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love; and the consciousness of these feelings will be to you an evidence that you have received Christ, thus adding the assurance of experience to the assurance of faith. But although you should lose this consciousness, for a season, in the hour of temptation, or when sin clouds the mind, you will still be able to fall back on the Divine testimony, and to draw from it the assurance that Christ is yours. This, in the time of fiery trial,—in the darkness which ensues when you have been overcome by temptation, or led captive under the power of sin, is a rock on which you can stand unmoved. When the soul seems barren of all that is good, and the light of God's countenance is concealed, this word abides with you. As the storm rolls over you, all your good feelings seem to be destroyed, and you may be constrained to say, "I have no peace, no joy, no love, no evidence of my acceptance." But even then you can add, hopefully, "I have still Christ; for God tells me he has given Christ for me." And, holding fast by that word, you have courage to pray, to look up, to put your trust in God; and the storm passes by and leaves you unhurt; and the clouds disperse; and the peace, and the joy, and the love, and the sweet



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sense of acceptance, return again. God's word being its foundation, your assurance outlives the severest trial; for in all circumstances that word remains true, and you can still say, "I know that Christ is mine, because God testifies that he has been given for me."

In previous discourses we have spoken of the gift of Christ, as pledging God to the bestowment of every blessing. It does so by reason of its unspeakable value. It is proper in such a case to reason from the greater to the less. The Saviour has taught us to do so, when he inculcates trust in God for the supply of our temporal wants, by asking, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Paul does so when he says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The argument is, the love which has proved sufficient to bestow the greatest gift, will not withhold from us any blessing; and it is one which commends itself to our judgment. And reasoning thus, we confidently trust in God for every blessing; for there is no blessing which God prizes so highly as his own Son. My bodily wants require to be supplied; but there is no

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blessing necessary to my temporal life, which may be compared with Christ, and the love which gave me him, will not refuse me them. Many spiritual wants have I also ; but nothing which I require to satisfy the cravings of my soul is so valuable as Christ, and for the greatest, as well as the least, I can trust that love which parted with Christ for me. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Nor is this all. Being possessed of Christ we are already possessed of every spiritual blessing, for all these blessings are treasured up in him ; and roving in thought over the abundant store, admiring its adaptation and its preciousness, you can say, "It is all mine." There is nothing adapted to your condition, as a sinner, which he does not supply. Tell me what you require in order to your spiritual and eternal welfare, and I will find in Christ some blessing which is the counterpart of your need. You have no goodness in you, and cannot produce it by your best efforts ; but God has given you Christ, and all goodness is in him. Your sins expose you to the curse of the violated law ; but God has given you Christ, and his sufferings'

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are placed to your account. You have none of that righteousness which the law requires, or of which God can accept; but you find it in Christ, for his righteousness is perfect, and he is yours. You feel the plagues of your own heart, and mourn over the sin which mingles even with your best services; but God has given you Christ, and he is your sanctification: his blood cleanseth you from all sin. Your prayers, you say, are unworthy of God's acceptance, they are so faithless and so cold you would despair of receiving an answer to them, did they depend on their own merits; but you know that Christ is yours, and he is an advocate with the Father: he takes your poor prayers and presents them perfumed with the incense of his own sacrifice, and so pleads on your behalf. You are conscious that you have not strength to resist temptation, or to withstand the assault of your spiritual adversaries; but Christ is yours, and his omnipotence is employed in your defence. You have no title to heaven, and deserve not to be admitted there; but he is worthy whom God has given you, and you have an indisputable title in his meritorious work. To that crown of glory, to that golden harp, to that white robe, to that

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triumphal palm, you have no claim ; but his blood has bought them, and he is yours. Empty, yourself, of all but sin, you have all that is necessary to secure your admission to heaven ; for it is all in Christ, and Christ is yours. Even Gabriel holds not his crown by a title so valid as that which you have in Christ, for Gabriel's righteousness is not equal to the righteousness of Gabriel's Lord. And, poor sinner as you are, if you are but possessed of Christ, though you may be less happy, you are not less secure, than

"The glorified spirits in heaven."

And now, my hearers, be it yours to say with the Apostle, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." You have the same ground that he had for regarding that gift as yours. He drew his hope and his consolation from the Divine testimony, and that testimony is addressed to you as truly as it was to him. Oh, let not unbelief deprive you of God's greatest gift, and rob God of the thanksgiving which that gift should excite ; but claiming Christ as yours, on the authority of God's testimony, let your life,

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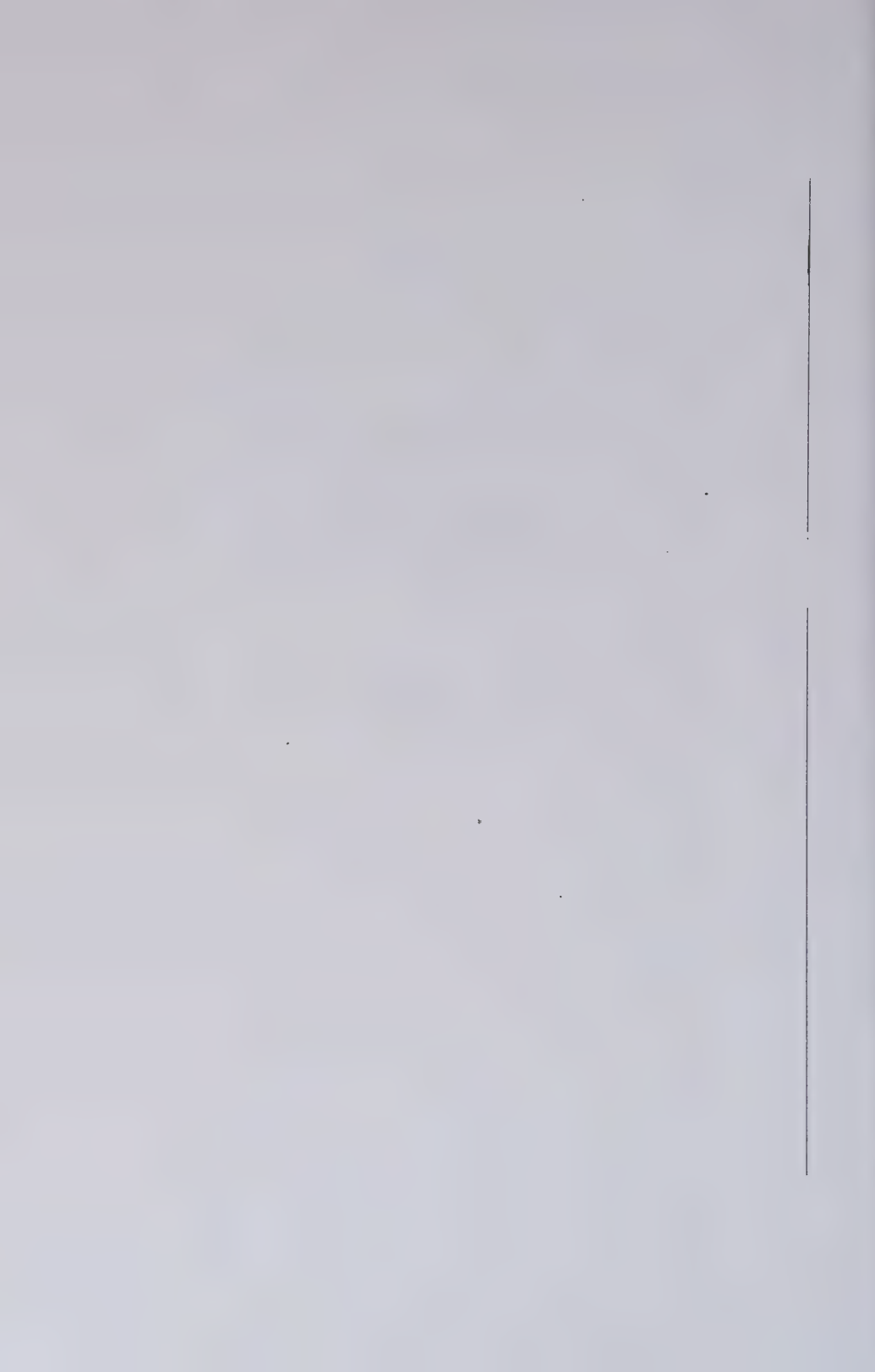
as well as your lips, testify to the gratitude which  
you cherish.

" Now I can say, ' this gift is mine,'  
The world shall lie beneath my feet ;  
Though poor, no more will I repine,  
Or look with envy on the great.

This precious jewel will I keep,  
And lodge it safe within my heart :  
At home, abroad, awake, asleep,  
It never shall from thence depart."

IV.

THE SIN OF THE WORLD PUT  
AWAY BY CHRIST.





#### IV.

### THE SIN OF THE WORLD PUT AWAY BY CHRIST.

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“ The sting of death is sin.”

“ But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

“ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

“ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

“ But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

“ Jesus said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

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To some of you, sin is the plague of life as well as “ the sting of death.” The consciousness of guilt mars the enjoyment of the present, and

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darkens the prospect of the future. The unhappiness which you feel is not attributable to anything in your outward condition. I know not what that is. It may be, that your temporal circumstances and social position are such, that, in this respect, you could scarcely be more favourably situated—having sources of comfort and reasons for thankfulness beyond most men, so that, looking only at that which is outward, men say of you, "How happy they might be!"—wanting nothing, in fact, to render you happy, were your mental state in harmony with your outward circumstances. But, though you may be thus favourably situated, externally, I know that you are not happy, because the consciousness that all is not right between you and God, a sense of unpreparedness for that meeting with God which you anticipate, embitters every half-hour of your existence.

That unpreparedness is the consequence of sin. Had you no sin, you would no more dread the expected meeting with God, than the angels who dwell in his presence; your relation to God would be the same as theirs. But for sin, you would no more fear to meet him than the child fears to run into the open arms of its father; for,

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is he not the Divine Father, with a love how much more generous, and a pity how much more tender and enduring, than any earthly parent's? But, alas! sin comes between you and your God. Because of your accusing conscience, you see a frown on the face of the Almighty, which prevents your taking refuge in those arms of love, and leaning your head on that pitying breast.

God is the author of your being. By his providence your life has been preserved. You are sustained by his power. He opens his hand and liberally supplies your wants. You are indebted to him for every breath, and every pulsation. He protected you in the helplessness of infancy, and has watched over you when you were wrapped in the unconsciousness of slumber. He has endowed you with faculties capable of endless improvement, making provision for their present exercise in a manner conducive to your happiness; and, in a word, he has bestowed upon you innumerable blessings. And in return for all this, he requires you to love him supremely—with your whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. You must admit that the demand is reasonable. If the child should love its parent—if the pauper should be grateful to his benefactor—

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if the pensioner on the unmerited bounty of another is laid under obligation which he cannot innocently refuse to acknowledge; much more are you, as the creatures of God's power, and the recipients of his bounty, under obligation to love him supremely.

But, ah! what a contrast between your obligations and your conduct! Instead of loving God supremely, you have lived almost as if he did not exist. You know how seldom he has had a place in your thoughts; and when you have thought of him, it has not been as a Being to be loved and adored, but as an object of dread and aversion. As you recall the past, you can remember weeks during which no thought of God ever entered your mind; and when such thoughts did arise, being as unwelcome as painful, they were speedily dismissed. Many days have passed in which the blessings he bestowed elicited no gratitude; many years, during which you have rendered him no service. He has preserved you, and you have acknowledged no dependence; supplied your wants, and you have given him no thanks; blessed you, and you have recognised no obligation. Your lives could not have been widely different had there been no God. More

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godless they could scarcely have been ; and the only consequence of his existence which they show, is, that you have added enmity to your godlessness. You have not only been silent, when he claimed your praise ; cold, when he appealed to your gratitude ; but when he demanded your homage and your service, you have responded to his demand with enmity and defiance. Instead of the bent knee of adoration, there has been the uplifted arm of rebellion ; instead of a grateful, loving, confiding heart, and a holy and devoted life, yours has been a heart in which unholy passions lurked and revelled, and a life in which hostility has been manifested every time you have come into nearer contact with your Maker. Oh ! what ungodliness is concealed beneath that fair exterior ! Calm as your outward life has been, and free as it has been from all striking improprieties, in the secret recesses of the soul, you have been waging a rebellion against God with all the forces of your nature. What uneasiness have you felt, and how have you been torn by internal agitation, when God has been present to your mind ! When his law has engaged your attention, how irksome have its restraints appeared, and how has your heart risen in opposi-

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tion to its requirements ! And even now, as you sit in the presence of God, does not your conscience charge you with many an act which God's law condemns ? Yea, does it not testify that your whole life has been one prolonged and unbroken course of rebellion ?—since you know not so much as one day, you cannot point even to a single hour, nor can you fix your thoughts on one solitary moment, in which you have loved God as you ought, or have rendered him the service which is his due.

This appeal might be presented to the conscience of every one present with the same result. It is a rare thing to find a man who has no consciousness of guilt—if, indeed, such an one is ever found. We have never questioned one, however defective his notions as to the requirements of God's law, however inaccurate his conceptions of duty, who was not, occasionally, more or less troubled with an accusing conscience. Some we have met with, whose moral sense seemed so dormant, that at first we were disposed to regard them as exceptional cases ; but even these have afterwards confirmed the general truth. Examine them closely, and you will find in the most stolid and insensible, when their position seems most

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secure, some slight sense of sin and apprehension of danger; and in proportion as thought is exercised, the slight sense assumes the appearance of a powerful conviction; and that, in the near prospect of death, sometimes deepens into the agony of despair. Even the infidel, who boldly asserts his innocence, and blasphemously challenges God to lay aught to his charge, and professes his readiness to plunge into eternity without fear, is not without the conviction which is common to others. That assertion of innocence, so loudly, and so boldly, uttered;—does it not, frequently, betoken a sense of guilt which it would fain conceal? That vaunted courage;—is it not, sometimes, a mere semblance, a hollow cloak for fear? Ah! we fear it is; for we know what a scene of agony the infidel's deathbed has often been; and how the man, so bold and brave when danger was distant, has, in the hour of death, wept like a woman, and begged for mercy like a child.

Now this sense of sin is the cause of your unhappiness. You naturally connect sin with suffering. You know that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." And, while you know



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this, it is not surprising that the thought of your sin should excite in you forebodings of punishment, which embitter your whole life. We speak to you of the love of God, and you assent to the truth that he is love; you even admit that he loves you, or, at least, that he is so good and so favourably disposed towards you, that he would love you, were it not for your sin: but, because of sin, you have no practical realisation of his love, you cannot regard his love as embracing you, nor can you derive from the contemplation of his love any of the comfort which it would otherwise impart. The sun of his love may be shining; but it might as well not be shining, for you. The cloud of your sin comes between it and your consciousness—a cloud so dense as to exclude nearly every ray of light which his love would shed along your path; and you wander in darkness and in wretchedness, “having no hope, and without God in the world.”

Alas for you! In vain do we try to comfort you by pointing to the tokens of God's goodness. In vain do we speak to you consoling words. In vain would we promote your happiness by improving your temporal position, or leading you to reflect on its advantages. There is no happiness

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for you, until you know that your sins have been expiated, and so put away that they do not present an obstacle to your enjoyment of the love of God. You can find no peace while your sins, with dark and frowning aspect, obtrude between you and your Maker. Could we furnish you with all the appliances of comfort which civilisation has devised—could we heap upon you abundance of wealth—could we surround you with every source of enjoyment—could we gratify your ambition, by raising you to a position of authority, or by spreading your fame far and wide,—we should have made no provision for your permanent happiness, while your sin remains. In the very zenith of such enjoyment as these afford, the shadow of a dark cloud would pass over you, and pangs would pierce your soul, as the thought presented itself,—I may die in an hour and pass unprepared to my final account; all that I possess, all that I enjoy, “my treasures and raptures and achievements here, are but a morsel whose sweetness is not long to be enjoyed, and that will not ward off the stroke of death, nor lull the agonies of impending dissolution.” Had I the world for my patrimony, were I invested with imperial dignity, did I wield despotic power,

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and had I, added to all, a Milton's or a Newton's fame, if my sins are not put away, better had it been for me that I had never been born.

The picture of your wretchedness is complete when we add, that your sin cannot be put away by any effort of yours. The blood of bulls and of goats, though oceans of it were shed, cannot take away sin. Though you were to give the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul, the sin would remain. Nor can future well-doing destroy past offences. Could you, from this hour, yield a perfect obedience to all the requirements of God's law, you would not thereby undo the past; the sins you have already committed would still exist. Struggle as you may, you cannot destroy even one sin, nor rid yourself of its consequences. After you have done all you can, it will still exist to mar your enjoyment, and to cloud your prospect; mingling pangs with your sweetest pleasures, as the thought presents itself, —Death is drawing nearer every day, and my relations to my Maker are still unadjusted, my sins are still unforgiven.

The Gospel, in so far as you are concerned, would be unworthy of the name—it would bring you no good tidings, did it take no notice of sin,

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and make no provision for its removal. It might tell you of the love of God ; but what is that to you while sin comes between you and it ? What is that to you if you must endure the indignation with which a God of love cannot fail to visit sin ? " He loves me," you say, " but his love is of no avail for me now, for my sin has placed me beyond the reach of those favours which his love confers, and made me an outcast from the circle within which his love is enjoyed. And must I be told of his love only to have my wretchedness augmented, by learning how aggravated my guilt has been, and by having my remorse deepened, as I see against how good and gracious a Being I have sinned ! Must I be told of his love only to learn how much I have lost, through sin having for ever excluded me from the blessings which his love provides ! O, is the Gospel designed to mock my misery, by tantalizing me with the sound of good tidings, which, though they might have been good tidings once, are no good tidings for me now, which only serve to deepen my wretchedness by showing me how much I have lost ! Is it thus that God treats me when he professes to send me good tidings ?"

Oh ! not thus, my brother, not thus does God

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deal with you. His Gospel brings good tidings for you, and good tidings for you *as you are*. He has taken into account the sinfulness of your condition; and the message which he sends is precisely adapted to your need. That sin which you dread so much—that sin, the consciousness of which prevents your enjoyment of the love of God, like a dark cloud intercepting the sunshine—that sin has been taken away. The Scriptures read at the commencement show you plainly, that God has laid your sin on the Saviour, and that, by his suffering, he has put it away. To do this was the purpose of his coming; “once in the end of the world he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” This work was prefigured in ancient sacrifice; as when, after the priest had made atonement, the scapegoat bore away into the wilderness the transgressions of Israel. It was predicted in ancient prophecy: Isaiah, speaking as if the future were already past, says, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on

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him the iniquity of us all." John describes him as performing this work, when he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh"—or, as you may read it, *bearing*—"away the sin of the world." Peter speaks of it as already done,—“Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;” and the Saviour himself exclaimed, “It is finished,” before he bowed his head, and died. Thus, according to the concurrent testimony of Scripture, has the sin of the world been put away.

But in what sense has sin been put away? That it has not been put out of existence, you know; for have you not seen it in others, and do you not feel it in yourselves? Is it not more true now than ever it was, that sin abounds? Sin put out of existence! Then what means that criminal calendar—those profane oaths—those cases of drunkenness and of theft? What means that fiend-like war-cry—that oppressor’s lash—that slave’s fetters—that victim’s groan? Do not these, and ten thousand other things, unite in testifying that sin does exist? Sin put out of existence! Then what means this internal warfare—this struggle between passion and principle, between inclination and duty, between the good and evil in our own nature, in which the evil too often prevails? What means that burden on the

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conscience of many—that dread of appearing in the presence of God? Ah! do not these things tell us, too plainly, that as regards ourselves, as well as others, sin still exists, and has a place both in our hearts and lives?

You are, or you may be, equally certain that sin is not put away, in the sense of being rendered unpunishable. It were a sad instance of self-deception to suppose that, because Christ has died, sin cannot be punished. It is still true, notwithstanding his death, that there is a hell prepared for the devil and his angels, into which the impenitent shall be cast. It is still true that, “though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished.” It is still true that “God will render to every man according to his works,” and that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God,” there to suffer not less, but to endure a “sorer punishment” in consequence of the death of Christ, on the principle, that to whom much has been given, of them shall the more be required.

Then in what sense has sin been put away? If it has neither been put out of existence nor rendered unpunishable, what can such language possibly signify? I answer, sin has been so put away that it presents no hindrance to the enjoy-



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ment of God's favour, or of the blessings which his favour bestows. The Scriptures unmistakably teach, that before man could be restored to the favour of God, justice required that the Saviour should suffer. It required that a manifestation should be given of God's detestation of sin, and regard for his law. It is the guardian of the interests of the universe which sin has assaulted, and it requires that these interests should be secured against sin's assaults, by something being done, which will show that sin cannot pass with impunity. But, then, sin would pass with impunity did the sinner escape suffering when no other victim suffered in his stead. How, in that case, would God's creatures learn that sin was a hateful thing? If the sinner escapes while no other victim suffers, how, I ask, could the universe know that God detested sin? How could they know that he valued his law? How could they know that he had determined to put sin down? Such a procedure would be an insult and an outrage upon justice, and, therefore, it holds the sinner fast—holds him responsible for his sin,—will not suffer it to be removed, unless another victim suffer, whose sufferings will answer all its ends as well as the sufferings of the guilty party.

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If we may personify the Divine attributes, and speak of them as acting different parts—a thing only pardonable when our object is to unfold Divine truth to human comprehension—if we may so personify, we should say, that God's love was not unwilling to receive sinners, and to bestow upon them its various gifts; it was not unwilling to give them, and to do for them, whatever was requisite to their happiness: but there is the sin for which it demands satisfaction, and until it receives the satisfaction demanded, it places an interdict on love. Thus, sin is the obstacle to love's exercise. Were it not for sin, justice would remove its interdict, and unite with love in blessing the sinner; and it is only because of sin that it says to love—"Restrain thyself; withhold thy gifts." Thus, we repeat, sin is the obstacle; and that obstacle can only be removed by something being done to satisfy the claims of justice.

In God's justice, however, it should be observed, there is nothing vindictive. He attaches suffering to sin, not to gratify a personal desire for revenge, but to conserve the holiness, and, consequently, the happiness, of the universe. In order to this, it is not essential that the sinner should suffer: if it can be done in any other way, the ends of

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justice will be answered, and the sinner may be permitted to escape.

But how can this be done? How can the holiness and happiness of the universe be conserved, if the sinner be allowed to escape the consequences of his sin? How, in that case, can God make manifest to his creatures the evil of sin, and so deter them from its commission? Ah, that was the question! That was the problem which the wisdom of men and angels combined would not have sufficed to solve. But God's wisdom found the solution in the sacrifice of his own Son. He identified himself with us. He became our brother, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." He undertook our cause. As our representative, our sins were laid to his account. As one of ourselves, he suffered on our behalf, so as to make manifest to the universe the evil nature and painful consequences of sin; and thus did he satisfy the claims of justice—thus did he render the exercise of God's love toward us a righteous thing—thus did he do away with sin for ever, as an obstacle to the safety of sinners.

It were only blinding our eyes to the plainest statements of Scripture, to doubt that the sufferings of Christ were connected with, and occasioned

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by, sin. In addition to such positive statements as—"He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities"—"Christ also hath once suffered for sins"—"Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree"—in addition to such positive statements as these, there is the fact, that much of his suffering cannot otherwise be accounted for. All his sufferings were not occasioned by the treatment which he received from man: the severest came directly from a higher source. To nothing external can you attribute his mysterious agony in the garden, when "he began to be sore amazed and very heavy"—when his soul was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death"—when he prayed that the cup might pass from him, if it were possible; and "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." There is nothing in his external circumstances—no outward occasion of suffering, to account for this. True, he has the prospect of crucifixion before him: but other martyrs have anticipated a death as painful, without any such mental anguish; and he was not less patient and courageous than they, and had no less reason to reckon on Divine support. Nor is it the tortures of the crucifixion which

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affect him most during his final agony. All the suffering to which he is subjected by the hand of man extorts from him no complaint. He complains not of the thorns piercing his brow; nor of the cruel scourging; nor of the cowardly desertion of him by his disciples in that hour of his need; nor of the insults of his foes; nor of the nails in his hands and feet, on which his body is hung. He labours under an anguish more acute and overwhelming than these. He experiences a deeper sorrow, in which these are all forgotten. The one complaint which his lips utter, is occasioned by that which affects him far more painfully than these—the hidings of his Father's countenance—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

It is impossible to account for this severer suffering, except by tracing it to man's sin, which, as our representative, he took upon himself. It was the suffering which God attaches to sin which wrung from him that bloody sweat. It was the displeasure with which he regards sin which caused him to exclaim—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" He was then bearing your sin; he was enduring the suffering which was necessary to satisfy justice, and do away with

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sin, as an obstacle to your restoration to the enjoyment of God's favour. And when he exclaimed, "It is finished," the great work was accomplished; he had "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

I must not tarry to explain to you the philosophy of this marvellous transaction: it is enough, for practical purposes, that you should know the fact. An experimental acquaintance with the one will greatly facilitate, and, indeed, is essential to, an understanding of the other. Let it suffice, in the meantime, that you have God's testimony to the fact, that your sins have been put away, so that they do not prevent the exercise of his love, nor form an obstacle to your safety. As, when the dark cloud has been dispersed, the sun's rays which it intercepted stream down on the rejoicing earth, so God has put away your sin from between you and his love; and, just as much as if you had not sinned, that love now streams down upon you, surrounds you with its sympathies, makes you welcome to its blessings, attends all your steps, rests on you by night and by day; and, as much as if you had never known sin, do you "live and move, and have your being," in the unobstructed love of God. This, we say, is the message which

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God sends you in his glorious Gospel. The sin which you dread has been put away by Christ; there is no blessing which God's love provides, to which you are not as welcome as if you were perfectly sinless—as welcome as the holiest angel in heaven. Present peace and future glory, the immunities and privileges of God's children—heaven with all its honours and enjoyments—all that God's love would bestow on its objects;—they are all given to you; your sins do not come between you and them. You remember the heathen warrior mentioned by John Williams, who, when in a state of mental distress, dreamed that he was on his way to a certain place which he was peculiarly anxious to reach, when he came to a mountain which he could not surmount, and still less remove. After exhausting himself by repeated attempts to climb over the mountain, he lay down at its base in despair. Looking up toward its summit, which towered far above him, dark and frowning, he saw a finger stretched out over it, and on the finger a drop was suspended. The drop fell on the mountain, which instantaneously dissolved and disappeared, and he went on with ease and gladness in his unobstructed way. He became the interpreter of his own dream. “That



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mountain," he said, "means my guilt. That drop, the blood of Christ. It has put my sins away. They do not come between me and heaven. I may enter there." Nor was he wrong in his conclusion. The Gospel warranted him, and it warrants you, to say as much. Believing its announcement of the fact that your sin has been put away, your relation to God's love, and the favours it confers, is the same as if you were sinless. You can form some conception of the confidence with which you would have trusted in God for everything necessary to your welfare, had you had no sin, and of the calmness, and even the joy, with which you would have anticipated your meeting with him. You can understand, perhaps, how confidently angels trust him for all that they require, and with what holy gladness they appear in his presence. And if you could have trusted him confidently, had you had no sin, you may trust him just as confidently now when your sin has been put away. If, without fear or misgiving, you could have looked up to God, and called him Father, had you had no sin, you may, without fear or misgiving, look up to him now, when he tells you that your sin has been put away. If, with gladness like that which angels feel, you

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could have appeared in his presence, had you had no sin, blessed be God ! you may with equal gladness anticipate your meeting with him now, when you believe that your sin has been put away. Why should you fear it, if it has been all put away ? It cannot prevent the exercise of God's love ; it cannot hinder him from doing for you or giving you anything which his love may prompt ; it cannot prevent him receiving you into his kingdom and glory, and exalting you to his own right hand, when Christ has put it away by the sacrifice of himself. Oh, well may you trust that infinite love which sin no more obstructs—that love which, through the mountain of your guilt, has found a channel for itself—a channel through which it flows, bearing on its boundless tide, to your homes, and hands, and hearts, all the blessings which you had forfeited by sin ! Well may you trust that love—well may you place yourself at its disposal—well may you leave yourself to be borne onward by it, as the tired seabird, with outstretched wings, abandons itself to be borne along on the surface of the tide—well may you abandon yourself to be borne onward by that love, to the peaceful shores, and the sunny clime, and the bright and glorious inheritance, which it has provided for

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you, and for all who will live a life of faith in Christ and obedience to his will. Fear not; love, infinite love, is dealing with thee; love appoints thy destiny—love which thy sin cannot obstruct—love which is as free to thee and near to thee, as willing and ready to bless thee, as if thou hadst never grieved it by thy folly—love which reckons not against thee all the wrong which thou hast done—love which, to render thy salvation possible, has given Christ for thee, that he might put away all thy sin; and, if thou wilt but commit thyself to its care, it will never leave thee, but hold thee up and bear thee onward, until thou shalt stand among the great multitude which no man can number, who are “before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple,” because their sins, like thine, were put away by Christ, and they “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Say not, my hearers, that, while all this is good, and very consoling to those to whom it applies, it is of no avail for you, since you have no evidence that you are one of the elect. The Gospel, let me remind you, is not a gospel for saints, but for sinners: it is good tidings of great joy unto all

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people. John, speaking of the elect, says, "He is the propitiation for our sins," and he adds, "and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." And if you would know who he means by the world, let another passage in the same epistle, in which he distinguishes, in a similar manner, between the same parties, furnish the reply: "We are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." In a passage already quoted, the Saviour is described as bearing away the sin of the world; and in another, he is said to have "put away sin"—not sins, not some sin, but *sin*; sin as a whole, sin collectively, the aggregate sin of the world. These passages are wide enough to warrant your regarding yourselves as interested in the Saviour's work; and be assured, that God will never deny or disappoint those who, by his own word, have been led to put their trust in his boundless love, and in the propitiatory work of his Son.

Say not, either, that it is too easy a way of being saved, nor let the thought of its too great easiness hinder your reception of the truth. Think you that God would profess to send you a gospel which after all is no gospel? Think you that he would tell you to believe and be saved, if some-

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thing more than believing were necessary in order to your being saved? Would he say, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound," if the sound were not a joyful one, and brought no blessedness to those who knew it? *Too easy a way!* Is not its easiness a proof that it is Christ's way? Is not his yoke easy, and his burden light? Are you not required to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child?"—to look unto him and be saved? Has he not said, "Hear, and your soul shall live"—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat?"—Ah! you say, we are to *buy*, and that is doing something: yes, but is it not added, that we are to buy "without money and without price?"—and can anything be easier than that? *Too easy a way!* Ah! those who say so, little think how much it cost the Saviour—how he had to humble himself, and suffer and die on our behalf—how he had to endure the persecution of man—how the arrows of the Lord pierced his soul, and their poison drank up his spirit, ere salvation could be procured;—they little think of this, or they would not say it was too easily obtained, though received by simple faith. *Too easy a way!* How can it

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be too easy for men dead in trespasses and in sins, who can do nothing for salvation? What other than an easy way would be adapted to your case? Are you not shut up to such a way as this, which leaves you nothing to do, but to believe that everything is already done—the Lamb of God having taken away the sin of the world?

Neither should you be deterred from the reception of the truth, by the impression that it gives encouragement to sin. Say not, “if what you have told us be true, we shall be saved though we continue to live in sin.” He who so speaks only proves that he knows nothing of this great truth. You have seen yourself standing on the verge of hell, with God’s wrath suspended over you, expecting, every moment, that that wrath would be poured out, and plunge your poor soul in perdition; you believe that Jesus came and stood in your place, that that wrath might fall on him, and that he endured it all for you; you believe that God has assumed your nature, and suffered and died on your behalf,—that thus he has rescued you from the ruin in which you were about to be engulfed, and opened for you the kingdom of heaven;—you believe that, and yet

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you speak of continuing to live in sin—continuing to live so as to grieve him who has done all that for you? No, my friends, your hearts are hard enough; but they must be harder still before you can do that. There is power enough in that truth, when applied by the Divine Spirit, to crush the stone in the hardest heart, and to make it a heart of flesh. There is power enough to thrill with new life the soul most dead in trespasses and sins. Though it may lie in desolation, beneath the snows of threescore and ten years spent in rebellion against God, there is power enough in that truth to melt those snows into crystal streams of peace and joy, and to render that heart all fertile with the Spirit's fruits, and fragrant with the Spirit's graces. The more vividly you realize the truth, that sin no more intervenes between you and God, and that his boundless love surrounds, sustains and overshadows you, the more ardently will you love, and the more devotedly serve him. Knowing that the Saviour suffered to put away sin, you will proclaim an eternal warfare against sin in all its forms, and make it the business of your life to seek its destruction in yourselves and others. And thus, so far from favouring sin, when it is



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properly understood and firmly believed, there is no truth so hostile to it, as the truth that "Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

In conclusion, let me exhort you to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Would that I could persuade, though it were but one sinner, to look to him; my labour then would not be vain. "Look unto me," he says, "and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Look to him with an eye of faith. Look with a trustful gaze. Fix your mind's eye on the work which he has done for you. See him bearing your sins in his own body on the tree. Listen to his dying cry, "It is finished." Fear not to trust in his work as the ground of your acceptance. Look to it for pardon and peace. Look, until your fears are destroyed, your doubts dispelled, and your soul exults in the unobstructed favour of that God who so loved you, that he gave his Son to die for you.

Believers, let me exhort you also, to "behold the Lamb of God." He has peculiar claims on your regard. You are indebted to him for all you have, and for all you hope to enjoy. To his blood you owe your safety, and to his blood you

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will be indebted for the glory which awaits you. Through him you hope to triumph over death; through his righteousness you hope to be admitted to heaven; yea, the blessedness of heaven will flow from his presence. Saints and angels find their heaven in adoring the Lamb. The elders cast their crowns, and prostrate themselves, before the Lamb that was slain. Their harps are tuned to the praises of the Lamb. The burden of their song is the redemption which he has achieved, and his worthiness to be invested with universal dominion and to receive universal adoration. And if you would meeten yourselves for heaven, and enjoy a foretaste of its blessedness, you should engage in the employment of heaven while you are yet on earth. Let it be your business to contemplate, and to point others to, the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Let this be your motto, and a description of your life's work,—

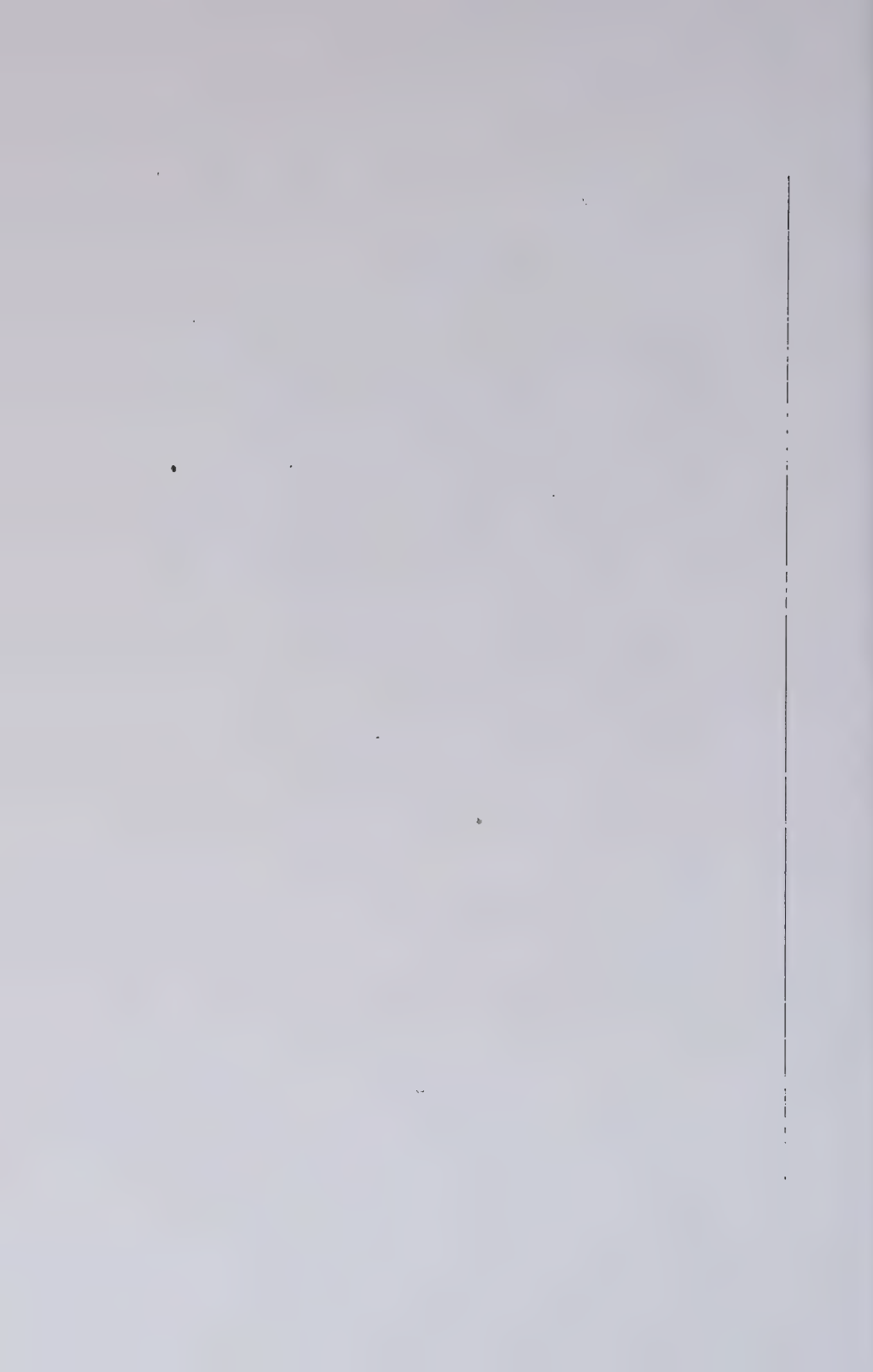
"His only righteousness I show,  
His saving truth proclaim:  
'Tis all my business here below,  
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb.'

Happy, if with my latest breath,  
I may but gasp his name,  
Preach him to all, and cry in death,  
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"

V.

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B



## V.

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“ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself : he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life : and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.”—  
1 John, v. 9-12.

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To a properly regulated mind, there is something peculiarly revolting in the thought of pronouncing an honest man a liar. You can hardly conceive of anything more insulting to the party, or more fitted to excite his indignation ; nor his alone, but that of all right-minded men. It would be deemed

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an indication of rudeness and coarseness, such as unfitted you for the society of gentlemen, and sufficient to exclude you from all circles having any pretensions to respectability.

And if it would be such a gross violation of propriety in the case of an honest man, how blasphemous must it be in relation to the Almighty! Perhaps no man, who believes in his existence and attributes, could intentionally rise to such a height of daring. Certainly, I do not suppose that any present has the recklessness or the hardness knowingly to offer such an insult to his Maker. And yet you may be unintentionally guilty of it, notwithstanding. My text tells me that if you are unbelievers, you are practically pronouncing God a liar, and treating him as such. "For he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar."

That you may see whether or not you are acting such a part, and be dissuaded from it if you are, I request your attention to the three following questions suggested by the passage now read, and embracing its various parts:—To whom is eternal life given? In what sense is eternal life given? How is eternal life to be enjoyed?

I. In the first place, we are to inquire, *To*

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*whom is eternal life given?* To this some would reply, To believers only. And did the question relate to its enjoyment the answer would be correct. None but believers enjoy this life. "He that believeth not, shall not see life." But our question is not, By whom is eternal life enjoyed?—but, To whom is eternal life given? There is a wide difference between the two things. It is quite possible that a thing may be given, in the strictest sense of the term, without the party to whom it is given receiving it, or deriving any advantage therefrom. A man might inform another that he had given him an estate in some other country—say in France; and the information might be perfectly correct. He might, in so far as his own relinquishment and consignment of it were concerned, have actually given it; he might, in so far as he was competent, have taken all the legal steps for transferring the property to the other, so that he could at any time assert his claim and enter on its possession; and yet that other, from a variety of causes, might never take possession of the property or receive any of its produce. In the first place, he might have his incredulity excited by the value of the boon, or he might so question the sincerity of the donor as to



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give no credence to the statement; and, consequently, never assert his claim to, or become possessed of, that which, nevertheless, had actually been given. In the second place, the document containing the information might remain unperused, or be read in a manner so careless as to leave him unacquainted with its import. And thus he might never know of, and consequently might never receive, the gift. Or, in the third place, he might form a low estimate of its value; and, being absorbed in the pursuit of something which he prized more highly, and having his time occupied with other engagements, he might deem it unworthy of his regard; and so treat it with too great contempt ever to inquire if it were given, or to accept of it as his. Nor are these the only causes; various others could easily be named, were it necessary to our purpose, which might prevent the reception and enjoyment of a boon by the man on whom it had been honestly and generously conferred.

For similar reasons, eternal life is not enjoyed by multitudes to whom it has been given. *Unbelief* is the hindrance in the case of many. I speak not of those who are usually called infidels,—those who do not recognise the Divine

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authority of Scripture; though the statement is, no doubt, applicable to them. There are many who have received the Bible as a revelation from God, and professedly assent to all its statements, who are, nevertheless, excluded from the enjoyment of this life by their unbelief. They interpret Scripture by their own prejudices. Measuring God's goodness by their own, forming their estimate of what he is likely to do, from what is usually done among their fellows, when they read that "God has given to us eternal life," they naturally conclude, that a statement so surprisingly gracious cannot be literally true; and, though they dare not meet it with a positive denial, they do what practically amounts to the same thing,—they understand it in another than its obvious signification. They make it mean one thing while it says another, and thus do they debar themselves from the enjoyment of the life which has been given.

*Inattention* to the Divine message is the hindrance in the case of others. The Bible is designed to inform them of the gift. But they have neglected to examine its contents, or they have read it in a manner so careless, that they

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• know not the import of its statements ; and thus they do not enjoy eternal life, because of their being wilfully ignorant of the fact that such a boon has been given.

Others are kept from its enjoyment by *indifference* as to the thing itself. It is too distant and too supersensual to prove attractive to them. They look only at things which are seen ; and have no appreciation of the unseen. It is of no avail that you tell them of eternal life ; here is present and tangible good, and their grovelling, short-sighted souls will not forego that, for what they call your visionary enjoyment. Worldly good they *can* appreciate, and the pursuit of that is quite sufficient to occupy their time, and *tax* all their energies. The invisible and future good, of which you speak, may be real ; but let them make sure of enjoying the present, and they will take their chance for the future. Poor degraded creatures, worse than Esau who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage, they forego eternal life,—life for the soul,—life such as that which angels live, for the sake of a little transient good, which gratifies only the animal part of their nature.

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But though these remarks were not sufficient to show that this life, though given, may not be enjoyed; the text gives unmistakable intimation, that it is given to others than believers. The unbeliever is said to make God a liar, "because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." What record? "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Now, it is difficult to see how, if life were not given to him, he could be making God a liar, when he did not believe it to be given. In that case, it appears to us, he would only be taking God at his word, and believing what was true.

Should it be said that he makes God a liar, when he does not believe that eternal life is given to believers,—that the record which he is to believe does not concern himself, but them,—I answer, It is idle to speak of the Bible requiring us, on pain of condemnation, to believe a record which does not concern ourselves, but others. He is ignorant, in our estimation, of the lofty purpose of the Bible, as well as of the nature and operation of faith, who supposes that it can so mock mankind. We see no other alternative, but either to deny that God's book is in earnest,

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or to conclude that he has given eternal life, not to believers only, but (to use a phrase frequently employed by the divines of a former age), to "mankind sinners as such."

II. We proceed, in the second place, to show *in what sense eternal life is given.*

1. In doing so, it is scarcely necessary to remark, that it is not given in the sense of your being put in actual possession of the enjoyments and glories of heaven—having the crown of glory already encircling your brow, and the triumphal palm waving in your hand, your feet treading the golden streets, no cloud darkening your horizon, no storm disturbing your repose, no pang mingling with your pleasures, all tears wiped away from your eyes. Ah! too well do you know that is not your condition now, whether it may be or not in some coming time. Some of you have not even the hope of heaven; and others have a hope which, as it rests on no worthy foundation, can never be realized.

But though you have not yet entered on the enjoyment of heavenly things, and have no good hope that you ever will, it may nevertheless be true that eternal life has been given to you; for

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those heavenly things are not life. That crown of glory, precious as it is, is not life. Nor is that triumphal palm, nor that golden harp, nor that white robe, nor anything in the magnificent imagery or favourable circumstances of heaven. Life is something in the man himself, something pertaining to his own nature, and not to surrounding circumstances. To place a dead man in some fair scene, where there is plenty to supply all human wants, food to please the appetite and satisfy the cravings of hunger, music to regale the ear, and beauty to charm the sight, is not to give him life. What is beauty to the glazed eye, or music to the closed ear, or food, however tempting, to the lifeless clay? The corpse remains a corpse, though surrounded with them all, as much as if it were rotting in the damp and darkness of the tomb. So, to admit you to the locality, and to surround you with the circumstances, of heaven, would not be to give you life. You might be there, and be as destitute of spiritual life, and derive as little enjoyment from everything which exists there, as the lifeless clay from the choicest provision.

You think that if the Gospel were to tell you, that you were made possessors of heavenly things

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—of that fair inheritance, with all its material splendour, and all the sources of enjoyment which its materialism supplies—those physical glories of heaven which are so attractive to the sensuous part of your nature—that, if the Gospel were to tell you this, it would indeed be glad tidings. But remember it might tell you this without saying anything about life; and, consequently, without giving you any reason to rejoice. You might be as far from happiness, though possessed of an indisputable title to all these, as you are at this moment, when, it may be, you are haunted and tortured with the fear of hell. Are you quite sure that you would enjoy heaven as you are now? “Remember,” says an old friend of mine, “if ever you once get into heaven, you will never get out again.” If so, would you enter? Have you such love for its society, that you would be pleased with the prospect of mingling with it for ever? Have you such sympathy with its employments, that you could bear to be engaged in, or to witness them, without interruption and without end? Is adoration a congenial exercise? Are you most desirous of being associated with the holiest of men? Do you enjoy, and are you frequently engaged in, communion with a holy



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God? Such questions, I fear, only serve to reveal to you your utter want of meetness for heaven, and thus make it evident, that before you can enjoy eternal life, your own nature must undergo a change. To have eternal life is not to be placed eternally in any particular position, or to be surrounded with any set of circumstances, but for the man himself to live—to live in the noblest sense—to live not as an animal merely, but as a man—to live the life of the soul—to live in relation to God, and so to live eternally.

2. Eternal life is not given in the sense of your being already freed from the condemnation which is the consequence of sin. The state of condemnation is justly spoken of in Scripture as a state of death, and freedom from it constitutes a part of eternal life; but that is not yours yet. We dare not tell an unbelieving man that he is not condemned. We know, and rejoice to know, that “there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus”—that “he that believeth is not condemned,” but is “justified from all things”—that he “shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death unto life;” and we can assure you of the possibility of your entering on

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this blissful state: but we dare not tell you that you are not condemned. Our message, which we can neither alter nor withhold, is, "He that believeth not is condemned already."

3. Neither is eternal life so given that you are already made spiritually alive, the soul which was dead in trespasses and in sins being already quickened and inspired by a new life, which consists in loving, adoring and enjoying God. This is a part of eternal life; it is, in fact, its essence, eternal life being but the prolongation of this spiritual or soul-life throughout eternity. But this is not yours as yet. Ah! you know too well that you are not alive. You still feel yourselves to be dead in sin. You are conscious of no proper spiritual emotion. "You have not the love of God in you."

4. Then in what sense is eternal life given? I answer, it is given, inasmuch as every obstacle to its enjoyment has been removed, and everything necessary to its enjoyment provided. The following observations will make this plain:—

First. The life of the soul consists in the enjoyment of God's favour. "In his favour is life." To know and enjoy the Divine love; practically and constantly to realize the friend-

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ship of the Most High; to feel assured that his love embraces us, and that there is nothing to prevent its exercise towards us; to be able to hold fellowship with the Almighty as with a friend; to ask his counsel in perplexity, and his help in difficulty; to regard him with no feeling of distrust; to have perfect confidence in him as being infinitely desirous of our welfare, and causing all things to contribute to its promotion; and in the exercise, and as the result, of such confidence, to commit to his care all that concerns us;—this is to enjoy spiritual life. He who is in such a state is already a partaker of heaven's joy; for though in degree his does not equal that of glorified spirits, it is the same in kind; and the eternal life on which they have entered, is but the perfection of that which he imperfectly enjoys, prolonged and augmenting through eternity.

Secondly. This enjoyment of God's favour implies the quickening of our spiritual nature, which is also included in the life of the soul. Thus we read, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. For God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." The

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change here spoken of, consists in the calling into exercise of spiritual feeling. In its unregenerate state, the soul is dead in relation to God, inasmuch as those faculties which qualify it for loving, adoring, and enjoying God, are never exercised. As the limb is dead which moves not, and has no sensation, so the soul is dead when its faculties are dormant, and it feels no proper emotion in view of the Divine Being. It is like a stagnant pool, which no breeze stirs, and whose putrid waters reflect no shadow. It yields not to the influences of the Divine Spirit. It cherishes none of those devout emotions which the thought of God should excite. It receives no sensible impression from any manifestation of his character. But when it becomes a partaker of spiritual life, those dormant faculties are quickened into activity. Reaching forth toward God, and laying hold of his perfections, they love, adore and enjoy him. As when the dead limb begins to perform the functions, and to feel the throbbings and sensations of life ; so those higher powers of the soul, which lay wrapped in a state of insensibility and inaction, are now exercised toward God, and are thrilling with the sensations, and heaving with the emotions, of spiritual life. The stagnant pool

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has become a lake of living waters, tremulous under every breeze, and reflecting in its lucid depths every feature of the surrounding hills and the overarching sky. The once dead soul has received the impression, and is now reflecting the features, of the Divine character; it moves responsively under the influences of the Divine Spirit, and in obedience to the intimations of the Divine will. Formerly but a part of the man was alive, and that the least noble part. The animal part was active, and perhaps the intellectual; but the religious, which is higher than either, had no life and no action, or only the galvanic action of a corpse. But now this nobler part of his nature is exercised. The man has entered on a higher life than he previously enjoyed,—a life more worthy of his lofty capabilities as a man, and yielding him, through the exercise of those capabilities on the Divine perfections, a kind and degree of enjoyment which satisfies the cravings of his spiritual nature,—a life which death does not destroy, but strengthens and elevates, by the removal of all obstacles to its development, and by its translation to more favourable scenes; and which, continuing and progressing throughout the ages, and being measured by the life of him

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who is its Author, is justly said to be eternal in its duration.

Thirdly. Observe how this life, in both of its aspects, is given to men in Christ. Through Christ the favour of God is free to us. As we have shown in previous discourses, he not only reveals God's love to us—the life of Christ being an exhibition of the Divine character, and the gift of Christ, as a sacrifice for sin, being the measure and the manifestation of God's love to the world; but he has also, by his death, removed our sins from between us and God's love. We were spiritually dead, because we were doubtful whether God loved us, and dared not rejoice in the Divine favour. But we need not doubt God's love, when he who was one with the Father—who said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" who was "God manifest in the flesh"—sojourned among men as the "Friend of sinners;" and when "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." We were spiritually dead, because we feared that our sin might exclude us from the enjoyment of the Divine favour. But we need not fear this, when we are told that Christ hath "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Sin being put away, the love of God

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is as free to you as if you had not sinned, and, sinner as you are, you may, through Christ, rejoice in it as confidently as the holiest angel in heaven. Life is given to you in Christ; for God's favour is life, and Christ has been given as the manifestation of God's love to you. Life is given to you in him; for he was sent that he might put away the sin which prevented the exercise of God's love toward you, so leaving nothing between you and God's love—nothing to prevent your enjoyment of it but your own will. And when you receive Christ you become possessed of the life which is given you in him. You enjoy the favour of God. Not only does his love rest on you as formerly, but you become conscious of the fact. You know that there is nothing between you and it. You feel that you are folded in its arms, that you are leaning on its bosom, that it protects you, and provides for you, and is making all things work together for your good. You trust it implicitly. You have no fear that it will withhold anything which your welfare requires, or permit anything which happens to harm you. Thus you enjoy that favour which is life. The love which surrounds you has entered your soul, making itself manifest to your apprehension, influencing



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your feelings, shedding abroad its own peace, producing in you emotions which are in harmony with itself, filling you with a new and a divine life.

We do not overlook the work of the Holy Spirit, but regard him as the Author of the process, (keeping in mind, at the same time, that, in accordance with the doctrine of the text, his agency is the result of the Saviour's mediation), when we say that this enjoyment of the Divine favour is necessarily accompanied by the quickening of our spiritual faculties. We cannot fail to love God when we thus perceive and enjoy his love. We cannot but feel grateful to him when we think of what he has done for us. We cannot but inquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And when we know his will, we cannot refuse to obey. We are possessed of a new life; for the springs of life are changed; our thoughts move in a new region; we are subject to new influences; the inspiration of our life flows from a new source. Having become acquainted with God, our spiritual faculties are all active in view of his being and perfections, and as the consequence of their activity, they yield us

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new enjoyment. Our "heart swells to God as the sea to the moon." As the aspen leaf quivers in the breeze, so are our feelings tremulous under the Divine inspirations, and harmoniously responsive to the intimations of the Divine will. We live with God, for God, in God. This is life in its highest form—spiritual life—the life of the soul. And this, strengthened and elevated as it will be when at death it is freed from all obstructions to its growth, and surrounded with the fostering influences of the celestial world, only requires to be prolonged through eternity, in order to its constituting all that is necessarily comprehended in eternal life.

Now, when it is true that provision is made for all this in Christ—when it is no less true that Christ is given for the world—when those who receive him become partakers of this life, and have in him the certainty of its prolongation through eternity, since he measures the duration of their life by his own unending existence—surely nothing more need be said to show that eternal life has been given to the world in him.

III. We proceed, in the third place, to inquire, *How this life is to be enjoyed?* It need

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scarcely be said, that great importance attaches to this question. A mistake here may deprive you of all the advantages which might accrue to you from the gift; and you cannot too carefully give heed to the conditions of its enjoyment, as specified in God's word.

It may simplify the matter somewhat, if we remind you that the life is in Christ, and that we receive it in receiving him. But here the question arises, How is Christ to be received? To this question we have already furnished an answer, in our discourse on "God's Unspeakable Gift." We have there shown—and we cannot do better than repeat the statement—that the only condition necessary to your receiving and becoming possessed of Christ is, that you should believe God, when he testifies that he has given Christ for you.

Of all conceivable conditions none could be simpler than this; and we ask you, How it is that you do not rejoice to know that a gift so invaluable is proffered for your acceptance, on terms so perfectly adapted to your state? How is it that you do not become possessed of that which you might so easily receive?

You say—not in so many words, perhaps, but practically you say,—“It is of no avail to tell

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us we are to enjoy life by believing, because believing the Gospel is a different thing from believing an ordinary report. This we can do; the other we cannot." But observe how much this assertion is at variance with the teaching of the text. Believing the testimony of God, and believing the testimony of man, are there placed together, as if the word, in both cases, meant the same thing. The writer reasons from the one to the other, and thus assumes that the exercise of mind is precisely the same. Moreover, from the manner in which faith is spoken of throughout the New Testament, we are led to the same conclusion. The apostles, in preaching the Gospel, and exhorting men to believe, never explained what they meant by believing; nor did they find it needful. Though their hearers could not know in what sense they used the word, (if they did not use it in its ordinary sense), they had no difficulty in understanding them. To the jailor at Philippi, Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now if by the word "believe" he meant something different from that which it usually means, the jailor—poor heathen as he was—could not possibly have understood him. He had no acquaintance with the

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new theology, so as to know what peculiar meaning it gave to words; and yet he needed not to have the word explained to him, nor had he any difficulty in obeying the exhortation, but that same night rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Is not such a fact inexplicable, if believing be the mysterious thing which you say it is? How is it that it was so simple and easy to him, if it be so mysterious and impossible to you?

“But does not the Bible say faith is the gift of God?” Certainly it does. The meaning of such language, however, is not that God believes for you, or that you are to believe in some mysterious manner. The most that it can mean is, that God supplies the truth to be believed, endows men with the believing faculty, and exerts the influence by which they are led to exercise that faculty in believing the truth which he reveals. It is no less true, that the Bible speaks of a living faith and a dead faith—a faith that saves, and a faith which does not. These terms, however, apply not to the nature of faith, but to its results; and these are produced not by any peculiarity in the act of believing, but by the nature of the truths believed. It is true, moreover, that

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the belief of God's testimony produces a very different effect from the belief of man's; but neither is that owing to the different manner of believing, but to the difference in the thing believed. Food nourishes life; poison destroys it; not because we partake of the two things in a different manner, but because they are different in their nature. So the peculiar results which flow from the belief of the Gospel, as compared with those which are produced by the belief of any other testimony, are attributable, not to the act, but to the object, of faith. As regards the act,

" All faith is one.

In object, not in kind, the difference lies."

" But," says another, " though the exercise of mind may be the same in both cases, you cannot deny that it is attended with greater difficulty in the one than the other. When God is invisible to us, and so far above us, you must admit that his testimony is more difficult to believe than man's." In truth, I can make no such admission. I should rather think that God's greatness, instead of rendering his testimony more difficult, would render it more easy to be believed, being, in fact, a guarantee against de-

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ception. And such appears to me to be the doctrine of the text. We there read, that the "witness" or testimony of God is greater than man's. And what are we to understand by one witness or testimony being greater than another, but that it is more worthy of credence, and therefore more easily believed? Two men bear conflicting testimony in relation to a fact of which both profess to have been eye-witnesses. The one is a man of doubtful reputation; the other a man of known probity. You reject the testimony of the first; you receive and act on the testimony of the second. Why? The one swears to one thing, the other to another—why give a preference to the word of either? The answer is, Because the testimony of the honest man is greater than that of the man of doubtful reputation: that is, it is more worthy of credence, and can, therefore, be more easily believed. So when God's testimony is said to be greater than man's, the meaning is, that it can be more easily believed.

There may always be some reason for hesitation ere you believe the testimony of man. What, though he has always been truthful hitherto, may he not be tempted to deceive you



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now? And, besides, is he not liable to be deceived himself? But in the case of the Divine Being, there is no such possibility. *He* cannot be deceived to whom all things are known; nor can he be tempted to deceive you; for "God cannot be tempted with evil." "He is not a man that he should lie."

It is assumed in the text that you receive the testimony of man; and you are aware that the assumption is correct. You receive his testimony not only in relation to the ordinary affairs of life, but to the most solemn matters, even when it determines whether a fellow-mortal is to live or die. Now the argument is, that since you believe man's testimony, you are able to believe God's, because his is greater, and therefore more easily believed than man's. And hence the strong language which follows—language which does not excuse your unbelief as if it were the result of weakness, your misfortune rather than your fault; but condemns it as your sin, charging you with acting a part than which nothing could be more criminal:—"He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar."

"Without doubt," says a third objector, "we are able to believe God's testimony; and we do

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believe it. We believe what he says of the creation, the flood, and various other things. But these are merely historical facts, and to believe in them is very different from believing the Gospel. That is so spiritual, and so much at variance with our feelings and conceptions, that it surpasses our belief." So I have heard men say, nor could I doubt their sincerity. Yet the assertion is most directly at variance with our text. What is the testimony of which it speaks? To what testimony does it refer, when it says, "The witness of God is greater" than "the witness of man?" What is the testimony of which it says, that if we do not believe it we make God a liar? Not the testimony regarding creation, or the flood, or any other merely historical event. No. It is the very Gospel which you say surpasses your belief. "For this is the testimony of God, which he hath testified of his Son. . . . He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

We admit the difficulty of believing this, if you measure God's goodness by your own or your neighbour's—if your conception of him be, that

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as regards generosity, he is such a one as yourself. In that case you will find it difficult, yea impossible, to believe that he has given you Christ, and eternal life in him. Such amazing goodness will appear to you utterly incredible. But you will have no great difficulty in believing, if you form a proper conception of the Divine character. If you know that "God is love"—that his "mercy is great above the heavens"—that his grace is more abundant than the abounding sin of man—that his ways and thoughts transcend ours, as the heavens are high above the earth;—so far from such goodness appearing incredible to you, you will be ready to say, as one did when she heard of some surprising manifestation of grace, "I am not surprised; it is just like him." You will see that such a gift is in perfect harmony with the character of that Being who is infinite in goodness, and whose "tender mercies are over all his works."

But not only are you able to believe; the text pronounces you awfully criminal if you do not. It charges you with the guilt of making God a liar. And if you dare not think of rendering yourself liable to such a charge, you are reduced to the alternative of giving implicit credence to

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the Divine testimony. Here is the record, that God hath given to you eternal life. Either it is true, in your estimation, or it is not. If not true, you may as well boldly pronounce it false; and thus take upon you avowedly,—as, virtually, you have done,—the guilt with which you are charged. You are shocked at the thought; you dare not write beneath God's record, It is false. Then can you write beneath it, It is true? You think you can; you are sure you can; it must be true when it comes from God. If so, what more do you need in order to your safety? It is true that God has given to you eternal life in Christ. Then you have eternal life in Christ; eternal life is yours. What more can you possibly desire?

But you are afraid to say that you have eternal life, for you do not feel any life within you. You are barren of good feeling. Your heart seems cold and dead. That may be all true; yet you must conclude that you have eternal life, or you do not believe the Divine record. And, surely, you cannot suppose that your feelings can affect the truth of what God says. You would never place them in the balance against his word. Besides, he has never told you that you have life within

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you ; and it is absurd for you to look for it there. He tells you plainly that you have no life in you, —that there is only death in you. The life he has given you is in Christ, and you can only find it in him ; so that, whatever may be the nature of your feelings, they need not interfere with your belief in God's testimony. The fact that you do not feel any life in *yourself*, need not deter you from the conclusion, that you have eternal life in *Christ*.

You shrink from this conclusion, because it appears presumptuous in one so unworthy. And so it would be, had you no better ground for it than your own fancy. But God says, that eternal life is given to you in Christ ; and that is not a presumptuous conclusion which rests on Divine authority. It is not presumption, but the manifestation of a submissive spirit, when we credit what God says,—incredible as it may seem to us, —simply because he says it. Oh, that word, God says it! —how strong the assurance which it affords ! This record is so surprisingly gracious, a believer might say, that it seems to me impossible that it can be true ; nor could I receive it on other than Divine testimony. My own judgment would say, "It cannot be true ; it is too good to be true." But, then, God says it ;

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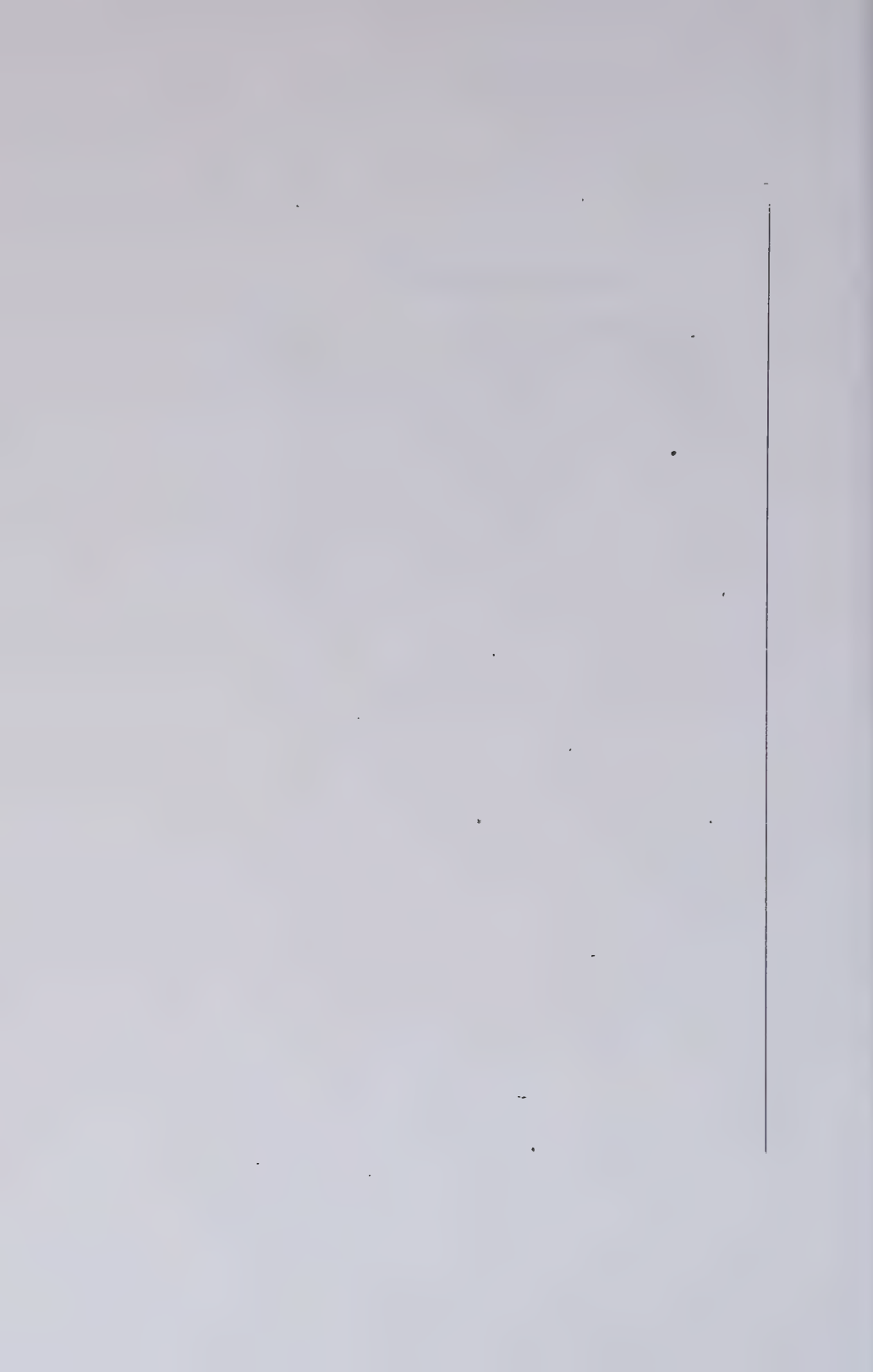
and, much as it is fitted to stagger my faith, I dare not make him a liar. I do not always feel that I have life. At times my feelings are such, that, were I to judge only from them, I should say I have no life. But God tells me he has given me life in Christ, and his word—irrespectively of my own feelings—is enough to assure me that life is mine. I need no other evidence to justify my assurance. On his naked word I can rest my hope. It cannot be disappointed with such a foundation, for God's word can never fail. That word will support me in my dying hour. And when I stand before the judgment-seat, holding fast by that word, and presenting it before God, he will not fail to grant me an acquittal, and to welcome me to his kingdom and glory. Then shall the life, which he has given me, issue in the perfect life of heaven. Then shall I know by experience that the record, which once seemed so surprisingly gracious, was even better—ininitely better—than it seemed. Then shall I see how abundant is the grace which has raised me to the enjoyment of such glory.

“Then death shall give this soul to know  
The fulness sought in vain below;—  
The fulness of that boundless sea  
Whence flowed the river down to me.”

VI.

LOOK AND LIVE.





## VI.

### LOOK AND LIVE.

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“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

—Isaiah, xlv. 22.

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I do not intend to preach a sermon on this text, but to make it the basis of an address to inquirers. In previous discourses my chief object has been to expound the Gospel; in this my purpose is to apply that exposition to the spiritual condition of my hearers. While it is my conviction that a knowledge of Gospel truth is all that is necessary to salvation, I have long since learned that exposition of itself is not sufficient to impart this knowledge. However clearly the Gospel may

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be presented, men's feelings and impressions are such at times as to prevent their perception of it ; and an important part of the preacher's work is to grapple with those feelings and impressions, and, by shedding on them the light of the Gospel, to show to his hearers their fallacy. To exhibit the Gospel before such men is not enough : there is something in their mind which comes like a veil between them and the clearest exhibition which can be given, so that if it be not entirely concealed from their view, they are prevented enjoying its light. They admit its truth ; they see its application to others. But they think there is some peculiarity in their condition which renders it inapplicable to them ; and instead of walking in its light, they live constantly under the shadow of their own impression. Accordingly, the preacher must endeavour, if we may so speak, to enter into their minds, carrying the Gospel with him, showing them its bearing on their own spiritual condition, seeking to know what feeling or impression it is that intervenes between them and it, and then drawing aside the veil, that so the light of the Gospel may, without obstruction, shine into the rejoicing soul.

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The exhibition of the Gospel given in previous discourses, would suffice for your salvation were it clearly apprehended. But there is that in the views or feelings of some which prevents this apprehension. You understand our representation of the Gospel as a theory, and you believe it to be true. But you do not regard it as a message from God to you. You have made no application of it to yourselves. It is a truth ; and for those whom it concerns, a very delightful truth ; but, somehow or other, it does not extend to you : you seem to be quite beyond its range. It *may* become applicable to you by and bye, but it is not so now. You have to undergo a change, or you have to fulfil certain conditions, you think, before it can personally concern you. And because you have not undergone that change, and fulfilled those conditions, you keep the truth at a distance. Now my wish in the present discourse is to deal with the state of mind which thus keeps the Gospel apart from you. I wish to bring the Gospel, which I have set before you, home to your souls. I wish you to understand it not as a theory merely, but as a message from God to you ; not as a truth existing without you, and having a relation to others, but as a truth which has a

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bearing on your own condition as sinners. I wish to bear it over all those feelings and impressions which keep it away from you, until it has been lodged in your souls, and you have been brought, as the result, to confide and rejoice in God your Saviour.

The text affords peculiar facilities for this purpose. It presents the conditions of salvation in the simplest possible manner—a manner fitted to remove nearly all the false impressions which obtain in the minds of men in relation to it. And if we can only succeed in applying the truths involved in its demand and promise to the various views and feelings which hinder your reception of the Gospel, we may hope that you will be brought to look to Christ for safety. May the Holy Spirit, who is the Author of all saving impressions, assist and prosper us in our attempt.

And in the outset it should be observed,—that to be saved *is to be delivered not only from the punishment to which sin has rendered us liable, but also from all that is wrong in our own nature.* You all understand deliverance from punishment to be a part of salvation; and, perhaps, most men who think on the subject, theoretically regard it

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as embracing deliverance from the evil which is in ourselves. But, whatever may be their theory, this truth is, in the case of many sincere seekers after salvation, practically forgotten. They would trust in Christ for pardon, but they must first feel themselves better than they are; they dare not trust—they must not trust, they think—while they are in a state of sin, and have such hard and wicked hearts. That is to say, they would trust in Christ for one part of salvation; but they must first work out for themselves another, and that the most important part; forgetting that if they could first deliver themselves from a state of sin, they would have no need to trust in Christ; forgetting that purification is salvation as much as pardon,—that they are as unable to procure the one as the other,—and that God is the Author of both.

Such may be the case of some of my hearers. If so, there is need for insisting on the truth that when God promises to save you if you look to him, what is meant is, that he will do for you everything which, as a sinner, you require. Not that he will pardon you merely—that would be no salvation to such as you, it would not deserve the name of salvation—but that he will make you all

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that he desires you to be, and all that you must become in order to your enjoying his presence at last. To hold out the prospect of pardon, leaving you first to find holiness for yourself,—what would that avail you? Your ruin is not simply that you are liable to punishment. It is in something nearer to you than that—in your own disordered spiritual condition. And nothing deserves the name of salvation which does not rectify that condition, as well as deliver you from punishment—freeing you from external inflictions, but, at the same time, bringing your whole being into subjection to the will of that God with whom, as your nature shows, you were designed to live in harmony. He who is saved, in the fullest sense of the term, is completely recovered from all the consequences and influence of sin. He is brought into the holy, happy state in which he would have been had he never sinned. Less than this would not be salvation. Let something remain from which a man still needs to be delivered, and he is not saved, except in part. So that when God does all that in our text he promises to do, there is nothing left in the man which he could wish to have otherwise, nothing from which he desires to be freed. He is freed from punish-



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ment, and he is freed from spiritual disorder. He is brought into that state of harmony with God in which he was designed to live, and his departure from which was at once his sin and his ruin. This, and nothing less than this, constitutes salvation. It is but another name for eternal life. Salvation applies more especially to the process of deliverance, eternal life to the result. To be saved now is to be made spiritually alive; to be finally and completely saved is to be raised to the enjoyment of eternal life. The enjoyment of eternal life is the perfection of salvation.

The condition on which this salvation is to be enjoyed, as given in the text, is the simplest of which it is possible to conceive. I am afraid to attempt any explanation of what is meant by *looking to Christ*, lest, by the multitude of words, I should render obscure that which is so simple. Let me just employ one homely illustration. When a man is unable to pay a debt which is due at a given time, or to perform a work which must be completed by such a date, and is distressed at the thought of his inability, if a friend of his were to say, "Look to me to pay the debt or to do the work for you," no one would be at a

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loss to understand what was meant by looking. And when the Saviour, finding you unable to save yourselves, bids you look to him and be saved, you can have no difficulty in understanding what he means by looking. To look to your friend is, in consideration of his ability and willingness, to expect that he will discharge your debt and perform your work, so ridding yourself of the distress occasioned by the thought of your inability, and divesting yourself of all fear lest it should not be done. And to look to Christ is, from a knowledge of his willingness and ability to save, to depend on him for salvation, giving yourself no concern about your inability to save yourself, and having no fear but that he will save you. "You cannot save yourself," he says, "yet your salvation is not impossible. Look to me for safety. Trust to me for it. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Such an invitation should of itself be sufficient to make you depend on him for salvation. If he thus commands you to look, and pledges himself to save you if you do, can you, for a moment, suppose that he will disappoint you? Should you not have such confidence in his faithfulness as to leave the matter of your salvation entirely

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in his hands, fearing not that he will fail to do aught that he undertakes ; just, as in the case supposed, you would leave the debt or the work in the hands of your friend ? And when he has given you such a revelation of his love to you, and has died to atone for your sins, thereby rendering your salvation consistent with the claims of justice, and so doing away with everything which might have interfered with the exercise of his love, we may well ask, Why do you not depend on him for salvation ? What is there in his character or his dealings with you, on account of which you refuse to look to him as he desires ?

Your answer to these questions is, that there is nothing in him to prevent your looking, but something in yourself. You dare not doubt the efficacy of his atoning work, nor do you question the boundlessness of his love ; but you are afraid to trust in him because of your sinfulness. You dare not trust him while you are so sinful as you are. Then have you forgotten that it is because of your sinfulness you need salvation, and that it was sinners he came to save ? Or do you think your sins greater than the efficacy of his atoning

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work, or too aggravated for his boundless love to forgive? Ah, take care lest you deny the efficacy of his work, or the boundlessness of his love after all! You are denying either the one or the other, if you refuse to trust in him because of your sinfulness. You are declaring that his death is not sufficient to atone for your sins, or his love not sufficient to pardon them. And when you think of looking to him after you have improved your condition somewhat, and made yourselves less sinful, have you forgotten that deliverance from sinfulness is a part of salvation, and that you must find all your salvation in Christ? "I know I must look to Christ," said a young man to me, the other day, "but not while I am in a state of sin." "If you could get out of your state of sin before looking," I asked (and the question showed him his error), "would there be any necessity for looking to him afterwards?" If you could so far save yourselves, I do not see why you should look to Christ for salvation. O, do you not yet know that to make yourselves less sinful is not in your power? You have tried long enough, but without success. You may have deluded yourselves into the belief that you are better, but in God's sight you are just as bad as you were. You cannot be deli-

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vered from sinfulness, any more than from punishment, except by looking to Christ. The longer you keep away from him, the worse do you become. He bids you look to him for salvation, and he does not mean that you should be made better first, but that you should look to him to make you better, for that is a part of salvation. It is to be saved that you are to look to him, and the only preparation requisite for that is, that you are in a sinful and wretched condition—a condition in which you need salvation, because of the evil which is in you, and the suffering to which you are exposed. This, I repeat, is the only preparation which you require, the only preparation you can ever obtain. You remember the state in which the prodigal came home. He was poor, hungry, clothed in rags. Did he wait until he had earned some wages, or until he had satisfied the cravings of hunger, or until he had procured a better dress, and could appear in a less forlorn plight, ere he ventured to return? No, he came just as he was—poor, hungry, ragged as he was; and you know the reception he met with. Just so must you come, without waiting for any preparation other than you have, saying:—

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"Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come !

Just as I am—and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark spot—  
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each blot,  
O Lamb of God, I come !

Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind,  
Light, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea, all I need in Thee to find—  
O Lamb of God, I come ! "

But some of you say, you are not waiting to be made better before you look to Christ. You know that you can never be better until you do look. But you cannot look yet, for you have no sorrow for sin, nor have you any proper sense of your sinfulness. You know that you are a sinner, but you do not feel it. You have been trying to feel your sinfulness and to be sorry for it for some time, but you cannot. Of course not. Sorrow for sin is not a preparation for salvation, but a part of it; it is one of those good feelings which Christ by his Spirit produces in us, not a feeling which we bring with us when we come to

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him. It is a part of salvation, we repeat; and since you can only get that by looking to Christ, of course you cannot succeed in your attempts to produce it in yourself as a preparation for looking. When you try to do for yourself what Christ alone can do for you, your trials must issue in failure. Instead of persisting in, what has hitherto proved, a hopeless attempt to make yourselves sorry, you should at once look to Christ to produce in you that and every other gracious feeling. To think of being sorry before you look is absurd. How can you be sorry for sin while you persist in sinning, in distrusting God, in repeating every hour and every moment, the soul-destroying, God-dishonouring sin of unbelief? You might as well expect to have the sunshine while the darkness of midnight continues to cover the earth.

“But are not men commanded in Scripture to repent and believe the Gospel? And is not repentance said to be a condition of salvation, as well as faith?” Yes. But that repentance is not sorrow for sin, but a change of mind. They entertained certain false notions which prevented their reception of the Gospel; and they were required to change their minds—to abandon



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those false notions in order to their believing the Gospel. In like manner you have notions which keep you from looking to Christ. You have the notion, *e.g.* that you must be sorry for sin before you are warranted to look; and many other notions you may have which prevent your looking; and you are required to repent of these, to change your minds, and at once, whatever may be your condition, to look to Christ for safety. You must repent of everything which keeps you away from him; and that is the only repentance you need in order to salvation. You need not be afraid of coming to him before you have sufficiently repented. The best repentance is that which brings you most speedily to Christ. You cannot come to him too soon. You are better with him than away from him. Whatever you may need to have done for you, he can do it better than you. Then look to him at once. "Look unto him and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

When I hear men complain that they have no sorrow for sin, I do not think them disqualified for looking; on the contrary, I deem them better qualified on that account. I would rather

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hear that complaint from the lips of an enquirer, than hear him say, "I now feel myself a sinner, and am prepared to go to the Saviour." I think that complaint indicates the more hopeful state of mind. The man is so sensible of his unworthiness, that he does not think himself sufficiently impressed and humbled because of it; and though he deems himself disqualified, that is just the state of mind which qualifies him, for looking to Christ. You think you would be better prepared for looking, did you feel your unworthiness and sinfulness more; and I admit that such a feeling is good. But you need no good feeling to fit you for looking to Christ. You say, you cannot feel your sinfulness; you are so destitute of good feeling that you cannot feel how sinful you are; you are so bad that you do not even feel sensible of your badness; you have so destroyed yourself that you have not a single good feeling remaining—not even the feeling that you are destroyed;—such is your confession. Well, that is just the state of mind in which you should look to the Saviour. You may say, "I am lost; I am helpless; I am so destroyed, that I cannot feel my sinfulness. Lord, my help can only come from thee; I cannot help myself. But

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I read in thy word, that, though I have destroyed myself, my help is in thee. Lord, I look to thee for help. Thou hast told me to look unto thee and be saved. Lord, I look to thee for salvation. I have no good feeling; I look to thee for it. I am full of evil feeling; I look to thee to deliver me from it. I have no proper sense of sin, no right sorrow; Lord, I look to thee for them." This is what you may say. And looking to Christ thus, you will find in him the help which you need. It is as destroyed sinners—sinners destitute of all good feeling—that you are to receive help from him. When he bids you look to him and be saved, he pledges himself to do for you all that you require.

All that may be true, you say; you have no doubt it is; but it gives you no trust in Christ. When you try to trust most sincerely, you find that you have no trustful feeling. You cannot trust him as you should. What must you do? Our answer still is, You must look. You can have no more suitable direction than that contained in the words of the text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Even when you have difficulty

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in trusting, when you have no trustful feeling, when all within you is darkness, and misery, and sin,—even then must you turn the eye of your soul towards God. Out of that state you cannot rescue yourself—only God can save you; and even from that you may be saved by looking to him. If you are distrustful, it is because you have lost sight of God. You have formed an erroneous conception of his character, or something so occupies your thoughts as to conceal him from your sight. Seek to rid yourself of all that comes between you and him. Look to him as he is in the revelation of himself which he has given you, and the very sight will suffice for the removal of your distrust. You cannot distrust him when you see him as he is. When you perceive his feelings for you, and his relation to you, your distrust will vanish. The sight of him dispels all spiritual darkness, as the rising sun scatters the shades of night. As when the sun's rays fall on the frost-bound landscape, your heart, so cold, so wretched, now that he is concealed, will glow with holy love under the unclouded contemplation of his character; and its icy wretchedness will melt into gushing springs of gladness. As the sun in summer clothes with verdure the

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bleak mountain slope, and adorns the once naked field with flowers and fruit, so, when looking to him, his love shines into the eye of your soul; though you are barren of goodness now, your life will become fragrant with graces, as "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," and abound in those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God." Oh! it is not to the trustful only that the Saviour's invitation is addressed, but to the distrustful as well. Even to them he says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved. Thou canst not trust me, poor sinner; that is thy sin, thy misery, thy ruin. Look unto me, and be saved from thy distrust. For what am I? Thine enemy? No. Thy friend—thy truest, best friend. Canst thou not trust me? Am I not worthy to be trusted? Am I not able to save thee? Is not all power, in heaven and earth, mine? Am I not mighty to save—able to save unto the uttermost? Or dost thou fear that thy sins may hinder me from saving thee? Did not I come to suffer for thy sins, and to put them away; and have I not finished the work which the Father gave me to do? Or dost thou fear that I do not love thee enough? When I have

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died for thee, thinkest thou that I do not care for thee? Is not that a sufficient proof of my interest in thee, and my desire for thy welfare? If the child can trust its parent for what it needs on the morrow, and gives itself no concern, and fears not lest its parent should fail to supply its wants, canst thou not look to me to do for thee whatever thou requirest, and to give thee whatever is necessary to thy well-being throughout all coming time; fearing not that I will forget thee, or fail to secure thy happiness? Thou hast no good feeling;—canst thou not look to him who gave his *life* on thy behalf, to produce good feeling in thee? Thou art full of evil feeling;—canst thou not look to him who *died* for thee, to save thee from it? Thy faith is so feeble, thou canst not trust in a proper manner; thy soul is full of distrust, and thou canst not shake it off;—canst thou not look to me to do for thee what thou art unable to do for thyself? I have promised to save thee if thou wilt look, and salvation is all that thou requirest; thou canst not desire more. Look unto me, and be ye saved—from guilt, from pollution, from wretchedness, from *distrust*—Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

It is thus, my hearers, that the Saviour speaks

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to us. And when he speaks to us thus, is it not enough to make us look to him—sinful as we are, naturally distrustful as we are—is it not enough to make us look to him for all that we need?

You are not yet satisfied, perhaps. You do not question the truth of what has been said; it may be all true, but it is not for you. You cannot even look to Christ as you should; you cannot realise his love as you ought. You cannot lay hold of his work. You are so helpless that all we have said brings no hope to you; you cannot look to Christ. If such be your experience, my hearer, the reason is not that you are unable to look, for looking is the simplest act of which you can conceive. There is another reason. It is, that you are making a work of looking; whereas it is no work, but a cessation from work, and from all attempts at working. It is to abandon all effort as useless, and to consent to leave ourselves as helpless sinners in God's hands. The debtor looks to his friend when, relinquishing all attempts to pay his debt himself, he leaves that friend, who has so promised, to do so in his stead. When the drowning man ceases from the struggles which only prevent



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his rescue, and abandons himself to the strong arm of another, he looks to his deliverer. And the sinner looks to God when, conscious that he is unable to help himself, he is still before God, that he may treat him according to his pleasure, fearing not that a Being so good, who so earnestly desires, and has done so much for, his salvation, will permit him to remain unsaved. When he reaches this state he is safe, for God's pleasure is not to destroy, but to save; and in the sinner's will there is now no hindrance to the fulfilment of his pleasure. When the sinner is lost, it is because he resists God, and will not consent to be saved. When he leaves himself to God, then God, in accordance with his love, takes pleasure in rescuing him from the consequences of his sin, in transforming his character, and in finally raising him to dwell with himself, where he shall behold his glory, and enjoy his love, and engage in his service, and adore his perfections, throughout the ceaseless ages of the future. So does God gratify his benevolence by augmenting the happiness of the universe, and glorify himself before all the hosts of heaven.

Perhaps the following record of Christian experience will better illustrate my meaning here, and

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do more to bring you into a trustful state of mind than any further explanation which I can give. "It was not until after a long, and painful, and fruitless struggle," says one well known to the preacher, "that I was first brought to trust in Christ. I saw from Scripture that God loved the world; I saw that Christ had died for the sin of the world; I saw that there was eternal life for the world in him; but I had no peace. I saw that I must look to Christ for salvation; and I tried to look, but could not. I could not, because I made a great work, in fact, I made a Saviour, of my looking. My mind was concerned about it as if it were some meritorious work which would induce Christ to save me, instead of being at once directed to Christ. I was so much taken up with the act of looking that I never saw him to whom I should have looked; my looking came between me and my Saviour. It was a fearful struggle; until at length being brought to my wit's end, I relinquished it in despair, saying, It is of no use my trying further, I cannot help myself; if I must perish, I must. . . . Then as I sat, feeling so helpless and undone, the thought occurred to me, 'You are in God's hands, and he loves you with boundless love; your sins have been put away by

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the death of Christ, and cannot prevent the exercise of his love towards you. You can do nothing for yourself, but such love will do for you all that you need.' No sooner had this thought occurred, than the spell which had bound me was broken. At that moment I passed out of darkness into marvellous light. I saw that I was surrounded with God's boundless love; I saw that there was nothing between that love and me. Even my looking did not come between me and Christ. I thought not of looking; I saw only my Saviour; I was in his hands; I could not be better than in the hands of one so loving. My sins being put away could not prevent him doing with me as his love desired. O how blessed to be in the hands of one so kind, so interested in my welfare; one who had died for me, and was perfectly able to befriend me to the utmost! Yes, he had died for me; and having done so much for my salvation, now that he could justly do for me all that his love might prompt, he would not leave me unsaved. O the unspeakable peace which then took possession of my soul! I have seen the dove, with panting breast and weary wing, dart into its nest, after having been for hours exposed to the pelting storm; I have seen the ship escape

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from the fury of the gale, and drop anchor in the sheltered haven; I have heard of the prodigal's contrite gratitude as he sat a forgiven penitent at the home fireside; I have heard of the lover's frantic joy, when restored from the jaws of death to the arms of his betrothed; I have observed how nature seemed to smile more benignantly, and to rejoice with greater joy, after the storm had passed away;—but none of these things will bear comparison with the peace, the calm repose, the feeling of perfect security, the holy joy with which my soul was filled. I had no desire unsatisfied; there was nothing which I could wish for more. I saw how foolish had been all my struggling; I saw that it could not possibly have placed me in a better position. I could not be better than in the hands of a loving God. But, alas! I had been seeking to become my own saviour, instead of entrusting my salvation to Christ. I had more faith in myself than in him. Blessed Jesus, forgive me that I distrusted thy love so long! . . . Since that hour, when my peace has been disturbed, it has ever been restored in the same manner. In seasons of spiritual darkness, I have tried to satisfy myself that I was a child of God, but could not succeed; I have tried to pray, and could not;

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I have tried to believe, to no better purpose; I have tried to look to Christ, and could not look, because I wanted to place confidence in my looking when I should have confided solely in Christ. And when I have felt myself helpless, unable even to look to my own satisfaction, again the thought has presented itself,—‘God loves me still; he is still my friend; I am in his hands; my sins do not prevent the exercise of his love; what more do I need?’ And entertaining this thought, I have again confided in God. I have been able to pray, with the assurance that he would answer,—‘Father, forgive my wanderings; Father, heal my backslidings; Father, save me from my sins.’ And to this moment I have no other ground of hope. I see so much sin in myself, my heart at times seems so destitute of good, so full of evil, that I cannot for the moment satisfy myself that I am a child of God, or that I am looking to Christ. And I do not try. I find my peace in this, that whether I have been born again or not, whether I am looking to Christ or not, I am in the hands of a loving Saviour, and I leave myself to him, depending on him to make me all that he desires me to become. And when I do this, it is not long before he fulfils his promise—not long

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before he makes me the conscious subject of salvation; breathing into me again the spirit of a child; dispelling my spiritual darkness; filling me with joy; causing my soul to burn with holy love, and making me feel that I should be willing to part with all I have for the sake of my generous and Almighty friend."

This, I take it, is a fair representation of Christian experience. Not only is it necessary that we should look to Christ at first; we must continue looking throughout every step of our course. We must be content to find our safety and our peace exclusively in him. After your minds have been directed to Christ, should you—instead of looking to him steadfastly and continuously—should you, for the purpose of strengthening your confidence, begin to examine your own state to ascertain whether you are being saved or not, that looking to yourselves will prove fatal to your peace. The very act implies distrust of Christ. He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved;" and it is because of the suspicion that he may not fulfil his promise, that you seek to make yourselves sure by examining your own state. And even though you had no such suspicion, though your trust in Christ had previously

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been most implicit, it would be destroyed did you seek to have it increased by thus looking to yourselves. It is when the eye is fixed on him—when we contemplate his love to us, and his work on our behalf, that we experience those feelings of joy and love which are the evidences of salvation: they disappear when the mind turns away from Christ, to look for them in itself. The Christian is conscious of them only while he does not seek for them as evidences of salvation. They are lost when looked after. The results of looking to Christ, they are enjoyed only while we look to him. In looking to ourselves for something that will constitute a ground of confidence, Christ is lost sight of; we see our own depraved deceitful hearts instead of the perfect Saviour; and, as the consequence, these blessed feelings vanish. The cause being removed the effect ceases.

Nor is this all. Even when these feelings are so consciously enjoyed as to leave us in no doubt of the change which has taken place in our experience, we should beware of making them, in any degree, the ground of confidence. Our hope of salvation should still rest exclusively on Christ. It is only in proportion to our trust in him that the sanctifying process goes on. It is when we



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behold, as in a glass, the glory of God, that we are "changed into the same image, from glory to glory." The confidence which flows from anything in ourselves is always liable to be shaken. He who derives his hope of safety, in any measure, from his own feelings is, to that extent, building on a foundation of sand. The evershifting sand is the best emblem of his everchanging experience. He has confidence to-day because he is in such a delightful frame of mind; but wait until the trial of to-morrow has dissipated that delightful frame, and what becomes of his confidence? O, if you would enjoy an abiding peace, you must seek it in Christ, and in Christ alone! You must look for salvation to him, to him only, and to him always. Just as surely as you turn away from him, so surely will you be involved in doubts and fears. The old distrust of God will return; and with the distrust, the terror and the enmity. Learn a lesson from Peter walking on the sea. The waters were firm enough beneath his feet while he kept his eye on the Master. It was when he looked at the boisterous sea, and thought of himself, a sinful man walking there, that his heart failed for fear, and he began to sink into the yielding wave. Like Peter, you are only secure

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while you look to Christ; look away from him, and immediately you sink into an ocean of doubts and fears. I have heard of a lady who was taught to look to Christ, and delivered from a state of great mental distress, by the following dream. She had fallen into a deep pit among mire and filth. Looking around for some way of extricating herself from her disagreeable and perilous position, she saw, to her horror, that its sides were so steep and high as to render her escape impossible. Glancing upward, her attention was attracted to a star of peculiar brightness, shining over the mouth of the pit. As she gazed at the star, wondering at its unusual appearance, she seemed to feel herself gradually rising. Looking downward to ascertain if it were so, and, if so, what was raising her, she immediately fell. Again she looked upward, again her eye caught the star, and again she felt herself rising; but looking downward again, she immediately fell as before. The process was repeated with the same result, until she thought,—It is the star that lifts me up; I must keep looking to it. She did look, and continued looking, and as she looked she rose, until she stood by the mouth of the pit safe; when she awoke to read and apply the interpret-

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ation of her dream. Now this dream is beautifully illustrative of our condition as sinners and the manner of our deliverance. We are sunk in a pit of pollution and wretchedness; but over that pit the Saviour may be seen shining as the star of the world's hope. It is by constantly looking to him that we are saved. Even when our deliverance has commenced, if we turn away from him to look for any ground of confidence in ourselves, we sink into our sinfulness again. We must keep the eye of the soul constantly fixed on him until we are perfectly delivered both from the dominion and the consequences of sin.

You object to these remarks, perhaps, on the ground that, in Scripture, men are exhorted to self-examination. True. And were you self-satisfied, did you feel sure of your salvation while there was much in your character to excite suspicion (as was the case with the parties for whom these exhortations were intended), we should exhort you to examine yourselves, that, being made acquainted with your danger, you might look to Christ for safety. But when you are fearful about your state, we need not exhort you to self-examination to satisfy yourselves that you are safe. You had

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much better conclude at once, that you are not safe, and make sure of safety by looking to Christ. You never can be wrong in looking to him. When you see him you are safe; you cannot but be safe. For what do you see? Your sins put away; God's love, his boundless love, the love which gave you Christ, streaming down upon you. And that sight destroys your terror and your enmity; you submit to that love; you confide in it; you have no desire apart from its purposes; you are content to be what that love is pleased to make you, to go where it is pleased to send you; you are happy because that love surrounds you. God is so good that you love him with supreme affection. Your will is lost in his. You are in harmony with him. You are happiest when he is pleased. And because he reigns in the universe, fulfilling all his pleasure, nothing which takes place can harm you; but all the evolutions of God's purposes, all the triumphs of right over wrong, and of good over evil, which mark the ages of the future, will contribute to your well-being.

“ Then fear ye not!—ye cannot fail;  
Your destiny ye bind  
To that supreme, eternal law,  
Which rules the march of mind.

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As God still lives, and as the soul  
Is his undying breath,  
Ye shall exult when hoary wrongs  
Are smitten unto death."

In such a state of mind you are safe, *SAFE*, *SAFE*; safe in whatever part of God's universe you may have your home; perfectly and for ever safe. You bear God's image, and he will never suffer that to be destroyed. He will not disown his own likeness. He will never cast away any portion of himself. In the day when he makes up his jewels he will recognise you as his own, and spare you as a man spareth his own son who serveth him. Nothing can exclude you from heaven, for you have heaven within you. Not from locality does its happiness flow. Not from the splendour which lights it up; nor from the beauty and magnificence with which it abounds; nor from the fruits which it yields; nor from the fragrance and melody with which its atmosphere is burdened. Partially it may be derived from these; but chiefly from the contemplation of the love of God which has been manifested in Christ Jesus. And while you also behold that love, you are, even here, a partner in their joys. You have a foretaste of heaven while you are a denizen of

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earth. Nor would you be deprived of your enjoyment by a transference to other localities, however desolate, or by being placed in other circumstances, however unpropitious. External suffering would not destroy your inward peace. The clear perception of God's love would render you superior to your painful environments,—just as, in olden times, it lightened the dungeon's gloom, and caused the walls which had echoed sighs and groans to resound with songs of joy, and enabled martyrs to kiss the stake, and triumphantly to wave the blazing hand, exclaiming "None but Christ! none but Christ!" Oh, then, let us look to him; let us say to him, Thou art all our salvation, and all our desire! Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth we desire beside thee! Our heart and flesh fainteth and faileth; but thou art the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever!

"O thou art our life,  
Be with us through the strife,  
Thy own meek head with rudest storm was bowed;  
Raise thou our eyes above,  
To see a Father's love,  
Beam like a bow of promise through the cloud.

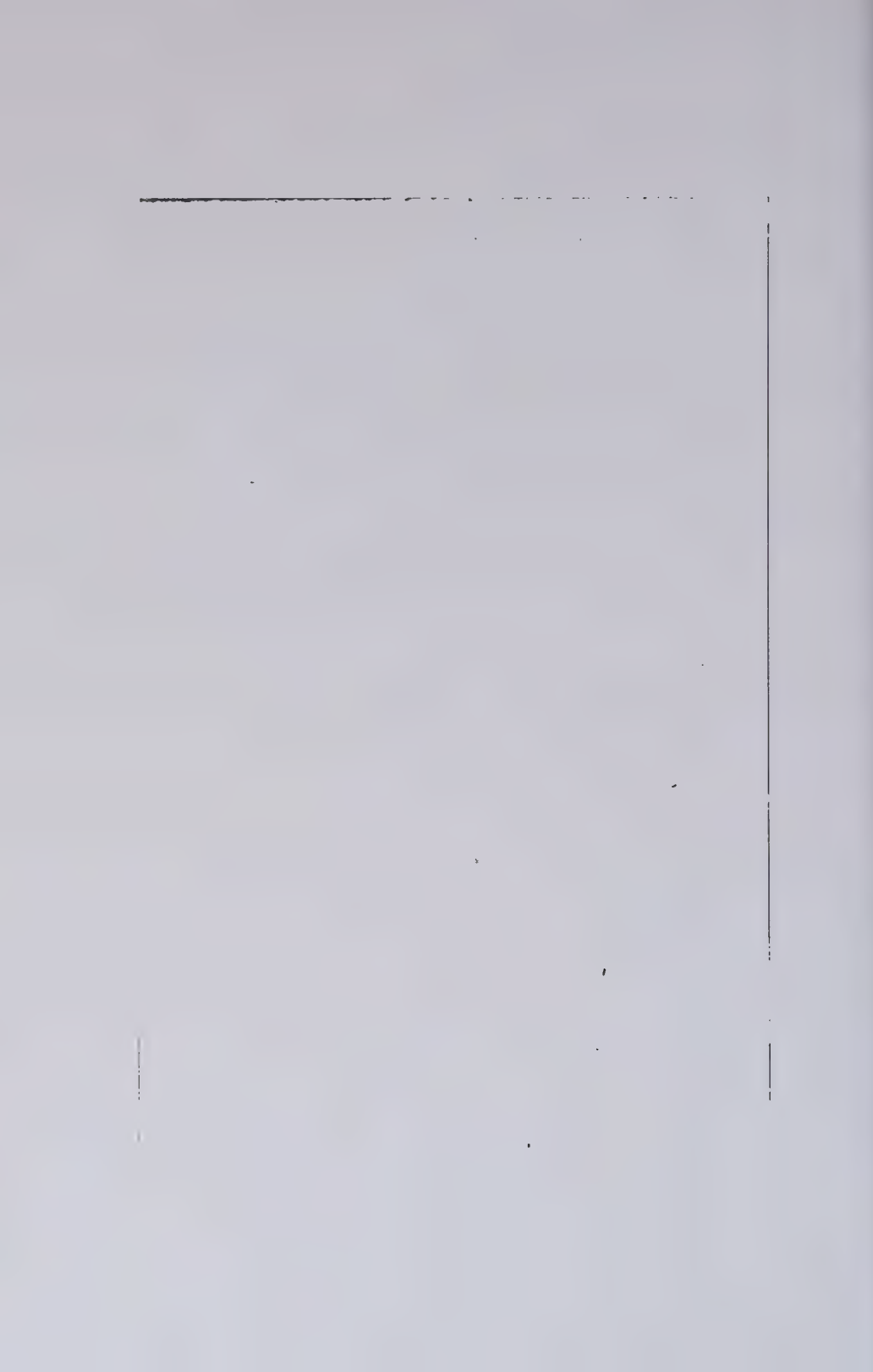
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Even through the awful gloom,  
Which hovers o'er the tomb,  
That light of love our guiding star shall be :  
Our spirits shall not dread  
The shadowy to tread,  
Friend, Guardian, Saviour, which doth lead to thee !”



VII.

THE HINDRANCE TO SALVATION.



## VII.

### THE HINDRANCE TO SALVATION.

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"Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

"And ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

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THE preacher dare not assume that, of his hearers, all are inquirers who are not Christians. The probability is that in this, as in most congregations, there are some who are neither saved nor eagerly seeking salvation; but who close their hearts against the Gospel by pleading objections

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as prevalent as the race, and as old as the sin, of man. And as in the preceding discourse an attempt was made to apply the Gospel to the inquirer, with the view of bringing him out of an inquiring, into a confiding state of mind, we now seek to make a similar application to those who, while they wilfully remain unsaved, attribute their continuance in that state not to anything in themselves, but to something in the Divine Being.

Plainly as the Gospel has been exhibited in these discourses, the only effect which it has on such minds is to elicit the incredulous inquiry,—“If it be as you say—if God loves us, and has given Christ for us, if Christ has put away our sins, and if eternal life has been given to us in him,—how is it that we are not saved?” To this inquiry we shall now endeavour to find an answer. We shall try to place our finger on the true hindrance to salvation, that, perceiving its nature and the guilt which it involves, you may haply, by God’s grace, be led to avoid it, and through the reception of the Gospel to enter into peace.

In doing this we shall not be able, nor shall we attempt, to avoid a repetition of what has

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been advanced in previous discourses. We intend this, indeed, to present a summary of the foregoing, and an application thereof to the parties whom we have more particularly in view. We wish to place before you, in brief, the truths we have already illustrated, in so far as they have a bearing on our present inquiry. They cannot with propriety be overlooked; their consideration is essential to, and they furnish a lofty vantage-ground in, our attempt to show what is the true hindrance to salvation.

I. They show, in the first place, that the hindrance to salvation is *not any deficiency in the Gospel provision*. If the teaching of the previous discourses be true, you can no more reasonably deny that the provision of the Gospel is sufficient for your salvation, than an Israelite could deny that there was balm in Gilead, that place being proverbial for the excellence and abundance of its balm; nor would such a denial be more at variance with that teaching than it is with the Saviour's words, in which he so plainly implies that life is provided in himself: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

From what has been said in our discourse on

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"Eternal Life in Christ," it will appear to you, that the provision of the Gospel, to be sufficient, must include three things:—provision must be made for the dormant faculties of the mind being called into exercise—for the love of God being enjoyed — and for deliverance from condemnation. It is enough, however, to fix your minds, at present, on the second part of this provision, as that involves the other two. If the love of God be enjoyed, it will at once deliver from condemnation, and secure the exercise of those faculties by which we may know, love, and adore God; for the man who enjoys the love of God cannot perish, nor can he fail to think about, to love and adore God, in return. To prove, then, that the provision of the Gospel is sufficient, it is only necessary to show that, through the Gospel, the love of God is free to, and may be enjoyed by, you.

However conflicting the conclusions to which men may come, who judge from nature and providence as to the feelings with which the Divine Being regards them, we have seen that the Scriptures bear no uncertain testimony on the subject. So conclusive, to my mind, are its statements, that I never stand before a congregation without

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an assurance derived from the word of God, that, bad as may be the character of some before me, much as God may be displeased with them, and strikingly as his displeasure may have been manifested in the troubles through which he has caused them to pass, there is not one who is not the object of the divine benevolence. Looking around upon you now, I feel assured that it would be impossible to single out even one from among you whom God does not love. I do not see one to whom I cannot, and do not, now say,—God loves you. There may be some present who have spent their lives in rebellion against God—some who have never cherished one feeling of gratitude to God for all the blessings of a lifetime—some who have rejected the Gospel, and resisted the Spirit's striving—some who have wearied God by promises of amendment which they have repeatedly made, but never fulfilled—there may be some who have taken occasion from God's goodness to sin with greater daring and recklessness, who have set their hearts in them to do evil because sentence against an evil work has not been speedily executed—and there may be some who have almost exhausted God's long-



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suffering, over whom the sword of justice is flashing, and between whom and hell there is only a little space;—but there is not one whom God does not love. I read, that “God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son.” I know of no manifestation of love which can surpass, or even equal, the gift of his Son; and I know that that greatest manifestation has been given to you, because given to the world. Nor has the love thus manifested in the gift of his Son been extinguished or diminished. It cannot change into hatred; it cannot grow cold; for God changes not. He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The name by which he makes himself known to us is love—“God is love.” So long as he is, he is *love*. Wherever he is, he is *love*. In all that he does, he is *love*. He is love everywhere—love always—love to all, and therefore love to you. These and kindred passages show plainly, that be your character what it may, there is kindly feeling for you existing in the Divine mind—that God cherishes love toward you; and whether or not he *can* confer on you the blessings which love would bestow, whether or not the claims of justice will permit of his saving you,

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though he were constrained by justice to leave you to perish,—he would, nevertheless, pity you and mourn over your perdition.

I must advance a step further. It is not enough for your spiritual life that God cherishes love towards you. A question of importance still remains to be answered,—Is it possible for you to enjoy that love? Do your sins intervene as an insurmountable barrier between you and it; or can it, consistently with the claims of justice, make you a partaker of its blessings? It is true, as we have seen, that God loves you; but that is not enough, for God is just as well as loving, and justice forbids that any blessing should be conferred on sinners. The question is,—Has anything been done to satisfy justice, so that, without bringing any reproach on his character, God can gratify his desire, by presenting you with the blessings of his grace? Could I not answer this question in the affirmative, I should fail in showing that you may obtain spiritual life; and I know not how I could profess to preach the Gospel to you, or what comfort I should be able to communicate. But I thank God that my message is as decided and satisfactory on this branch of the subject as on the other. I am not

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more assured from the Bible that God loves you, than I am from the same book that God's love is free to you; I am not more assured that there is kindly feeling for you existing in the Divine mind, than I am that that kindly feeling reaches to you now—that you may now enter into the enjoyment of the love of God—that that love may gratify itself in saving you—and that even now the blessings which it delights to bestow are placed within your reach and pressed upon your acceptance. What else am I to understand by those passages on which I have had occasion to expatiate—passages which tell me of God's justice being satisfied, such as:—"The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake; he hath magnified the law and made it honourable." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world?" Or those passages which tell me of sin being put away:—"All we like sheep have gone astray . . . but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?" Or those passages which tell us of love presenting its blessings to mankind:—"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is

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preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son?” Do not these plainly teach that, justice being satisfied, your sin no longer intervenes between you and the love which God cherishes towards you? They show, as conclusively as language can do so, that just as much as if you had not sinned, does God love you—just as much as if you had not sinned, is God’s love free to you—just as much as if you had not sinned, may you commit your soul to the keeping of his love—just as much as if you had not sinned, may you expect his love to bless you—just as much as if you had not sinned, may you with confidence place yourself at the disposal of his love. There is nothing to interfere with its exercise; there is nothing to keep it back from you. You may realise its blessings now; you may now rejoice in it as your portion. O, let not this blessed truth be excluded from your mind by the sinful doubt if the work of Christ be intended for you. You might as well doubt if the sun shines for you, or the rain falls for you, or the breeze blows for you, or the earth exists beneath you, or the sky bends over you; for all these are not more unlimited than are the terms

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which designate the parties for whom Christ died. If the earth be your dwelling-place—if the whole world be not too narrow for you—if “all” and “every man” be words which take you in,—the atonement of Christ has removed everything that intervened between God’s love and you. And however you may have treated it hitherto, and however you may treat it still—whether or not you may persist in your rebellion until the close of life—whether or not you may be led by the Spirit to perceive that it exists for you, and to yield yourselves to its influence, and to rejoice in its blessings—whether you believe in it or not, I say, it is nevertheless true that the love of God now surrounds you, and now seeks to bless and save you.

The allusion just made to the Spirit’s work reminds me of what some of you may be ready to suggest, that it is by the influences of the Spirit that men are led to perceive the love of God to them; so that if he does not give you this perception, although it be true that God loves you, and that, through the death of Christ, his love is free to you, you cannot be made spiritually alive. I am not insensible to the force of this suggestion; for I know that it is by the

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Spirit that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and that we are introduced into its enjoyment. But with all its force it does not prove that spiritual life has not been provided for you. For let me ask, Is the Holy Spirit indifferent to your welfare? Have you good reason to assume that he has done nothing for its promotion? When God loves you, and Christ has died that his love might gain access to you, may it be taken for granted, that the Holy Spirit cares so little for you that he has no desire to make you acquainted with that love? Is it not a more likely thing that he is anxious that you should know and enjoy it? Has he done nothing for the accomplishment of this object? I find an answer to my question in those Bibles of yours. What are these? Books which the Spirit has inspired. And for what are they given? To tell you that the love of God is free to you. Has the Spirit done nothing to make you acquainted with it? I think of the gospel sermons you have heard—of what you have heard to-night! The truth has been presented to you by the living voice as well as by the written word, that you may enjoy the love of God now: the Spirit is the author of that truth, and has

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caused it to be proclaimed in your hearing. Has he done nothing to make you acquainted with it? I think again of the Spirit's influences, of which you have been the subjects. I know, and you know, how frequently he has been striving with you—how often he has caused the truth to dawn upon your mind, and you have wilfully preferred the darkness to the light—how often he has wrought in you convictions which you have stifled—how often he has urged you to give attention to his word, and you would not attend. And you know, too, how he strives with you now. And as you think of all this, are you not furnished with conclusive proof, that as regards the Spirit's influences, there is no hindrance to your being made spiritually alive? and that, in the fullest sense, the Saviour's implication is true, that spiritual life has been provided for you? Now, mark your position:—God cherishes love toward you. Through the death of Christ, his love is resting upon you. The Spirit is seeking to make you acquainted with that love, and a partaker of the enjoyment which it yields. Everything is here which is necessary to your spiritual life. Why, then, do you continue in a state of death? Can you give the reason? Ah, the true reason



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is one which you are slow to acknowledge. You would rather attribute it to some backwardness in God, or to some deficiency in the provision which he has made. But after what we have said, it is evident the hindrance cannot be there. Be what it may, the hindrance to your salvation is not any deficiency in the Gospel provision.

II. It is equally evident that the hindrance to your salvation is *not that God is unwilling to save you*. This truth has not been formally stated in any of the foregoing discourses, but it has been implied in them all. It is implied, too, in the provision of which we have just been speaking; for how can it be supposed that God is unwilling to save you when he has done so much for your salvation?

We feel, however, as if this were an unworthy manner in which to speak of the Divine willingness; and that, even in the use of the term *willingness* we are apt to mislead you. For the truth is not merely that you are *permitted* to come to God—that God does *not forbid* you to trust in him. All that is true; and all that must be

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stated and insisted on by every preacher of the Gospel. He who represents God as unwilling to receive any sinner is guilty of a libel on his character, and of attempting to darken the sunlight of his love. And even he who does not give prominence to the truth that God is willing to receive all, cannot be regarded as making the Gospel the theme of his ministrations. If this be hid, the Gospel is hid. But if due prominence be given to this—if the preacher frequently insist that God is *willing* to receive every sinner—has the Gospel then been fully preached? Has all the truth then been told? I trow not. He has not yet risen to the height of his great argument. The most important and glorious part of his message has yet to be delivered. The Gospel contains a more wonderful truth. It declares not only that God is willing to save you, but that he *desires* your salvation. And though we cannot say how much he desires it, since creatures cannot measure the strength of the emotions of the Infinite Mind, this we do know, that your compliance with his invitation would be to him an occasion of joy. He will not only receive you willingly, but rejoice over you as with the joy of

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a father over a penitent prodigal, or the joy of a mother over the return of a much-beloved and long-lost child.

For a reason already mentioned—the incapability of man properly to represent the feelings of Jehovah—I should shrink from presenting any illustration of this part of the subject. I should fear that, instead of producing the effect intended, it would give you far too low a conception of the strength of God's desire. Accordingly I refer you to one which the Saviour has employed; and which, therefore, cannot mislead you, if you do not pervert it, but keep in mind that that which is human can but faintly shadow forth that which is divine. The parable of the prodigal gives such a touching representation of God's desire that sinners should come to him, that it requires a hard heart to read it with the understanding that such is its design, and yet to resist its influence.

On the prodigal's return we read that, "When he was yet a great way off, the father saw him." What a touch of nature is there! Who knows not that that is just what might be expected of a father who still loves his son? He cannot help looking wistfully in the direction of the country

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whither his son has wandered,—standing in the clear night, and as the moon rises in the east, saying within himself, “That moon has been shining on the path, perhaps on the grave, of my poor lost son!”—wandering forth in the morning’s dawn to the hill behind the house, in the hope, which is becoming fainter every day, of seeing in the distance the poor prodigal, with timid step and trembling heart, returning home. And now it seems as if the proximity of the loved one exerted on the father a kind of magnetic influence, drawing him irresistibly in that direction, or as if the impression were borne on his mind that to-day his son will return; and as if, under the influence of that impression, “he were waiting with all a father’s heart to be gracious to his erring child.” For long before he approached his home, “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.” Beautiful picture of parental affection! And when He who could not err employs this as an illustration of the Divine feeling toward the lost, how impressively are we taught that God desires the salvation and happiness of those who are alienated from himself. Impressively are we taught this, —but not too impressively; for the illustration after all, by necessity, comes far short of the truth

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which it illustrates. If earthly parents are so good, how much more the Divine! If they, with all their imperfections and narrow-mindedness, retain their affection for their wayward child, how much more does he who is infinitely good—who is the source of all the goodness which is found in the creature—how much more does he retain his compassion for rebellious man! Oh! wicked as they may be, he cannot forget his own offspring. There is not a wanderer, however far he has gone, who has not a place in his paternal heart. There is not one, however despised, degraded, vile, for whom there is not sympathy there. The mother, when conventionalism has not choked or dried up the sources of a mother's love, will bend with pity over the most abandoned of her children, will follow him with her prayers, will water her pillow with tears, as she thinks of his profligacy and wretchedness, will stoop to lift him out of the filth into which he has fallen. Ay, though his humanity be almost destroyed, and he has become a filthy heap of bloated flesh, with bleared eye, and besotted countenance, and broken frame, covered with rags and filth, a very mass of loathsomeness,—yet she will clasp him in her arms and cover him with kisses, if, with a broken

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heart, he falls at her feet and entreats forgiveness for the past. And a mother's love will not bear comparison with the Divine. Tell me not that the creature is better than the Creator—that human affection is stronger or more enduring than that which burns in the heart of God. Let it not be thought, that, though the mother can feel for her child, your God does not feel for you. Through all your wanderings his eye follows you glistening with Divine pity. The propensions of his heart go out toward you with infinite tenderness. His voice, tremulous with compassion, is sounding in your ears,—“Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” Hear ye not his lamentations over your folly?—“O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” And when the sinner persists in his rebellion, so that Omnipotence must leave him to his doom, how profound—like that of a mother over the loss of her firstborn—is the grief with which God contemplates the sad alternative!—“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?” Just as if his heart shuddered at the thought does he exclaim, “How—how can I bear it?” And with such language before you, can you fail to perceive that, with an

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earnestness greater than you can conceive of, God desires your salvation?

All the subsequent steps of the father are in harmony with this representation. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him." And what *did* he then? How did he treat the son who had behaved so shamefully, and was only now returning after he had spent all, and because of the wretchedness of his condition, which he had vainly sought to improve? If it be true that God is unwilling to save you—supposing that the illustration which the Saviour employs must accurately represent the Divine character—we should expect that the father on seeing his son would retire to his room and refuse to be seen; or, if he meet the prodigal, we should expect him to treat him with dignified coldness, or to assail him with terms of angry reproach, refusing to receive him because he did not come in a better dress, or until, by a course of reformation, he had made some amendment, or at least given some proof of penitence for the past. But how different the reality from your expectation, and how different the character it illustrates from that which you attribute to the Divine Being! "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him,



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and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." "All his child's ingratitude had not quenched that father's love. The past was forgotten, and he only saw his poor child labouring and toiling in his weary way, the famine mark in his face, and that face now turned again to his own home. This was enough for him. His full heart overflowed towards the weary wanderer. 'When he saw him he had compassion.' He had grieved over the lost one. The pity with which he regarded him as he set forth, is doubled now when he sees him returning. He knew well what would surely happen to his child as he saw him go. But now he beholds him in the depths of his trouble, weariness, faintness, and misery, and his compassion arises with double tenderness in his heart. '*He ran*' to meet him. How exquisite is this touch of simple story! Think of the prodigal. The last few steps will not only be when he is wearied with his journey, but just as he approaches his home misgivings may arise. 'Will my father receive me? Even as a hired servant will he admit me? What if I be turned away after all from his door? It is what I may justly expect, for it is what I merit; but if it be so, my heart will break, and

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I must lie down and die !' His loving, pitying father, spared him this. While yet a great way off his father ran to meet him—was beforehand with him—or ever he was aware, had prevented these thickly-gathering thoughts from pressing still more deeply on his heart ; and without a word, but in the tenderness of that silent love which is often more eloquent than language, he '*fell on his neck and kissed him.*'"\*

Thus, my hearers, thus—O let the tidings be received with rapture—thus readily, thus frankly, thus generously, does God forgive. He delays not to receive the sinner who comes to him. He is ready to pardon. He waits to be gracious. He requires not to be entreated before he becomes willing to accept the penitent. He needs not to have his feelings altered by anything which you can do ere he will consent to receive you. He will not frown you from his presence unless you bring some gift in your hand, or can point to something good in your life to appease his anger. Though you come destitute of goodness, in the rags and filth of your iniquity, he will hail the first step in your return and hasten to meet you, all filthy as you are. It is not only true that no

\* Drummond.

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sinner ever came to him and was rejected ; it is also true that no sinner ever came whose reception was delayed because of God's unwillingness to receive. And what we have to tell you now is not that, if you persevere in your application to him, Christ will receive you ; for that comes far short of the glorious truth which this parable is designed to teach : we have rather to tell you this, that before you make application, Christ is waiting to receive you ; and that the moment you go to him in his way, as a sinner needing a Saviour, that moment you will meet with a gracious reception. This is what we have to tell you ; for what else are we to understand by the father meeting his son while he is yet on the way ? " When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

The prodigal, after he had been so graciously received by the father, proceeds to address him as he had purposed previous to his return, confessing his sins and unworthiness ;—just as the sinner after he has been forgiven and accepted, and even more so than before, cherishes a deep sense of his own deserts, and invokes the Divine mercy. The result of his address, how-

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ever, is such as confirms what we have now said of the readiness with which God receives the returning sinner. "And the son said, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He intended to have said more than this. His purpose when he resolved to return was to have added, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Why did he not? Was it that he had become too proud? Or did he now deem such a prayer unsuitable? No. It was because the father anticipated his request. He knew what the son was about to ask, and he granted him before he had time to proffer his purposed request, not that indeed which he would have asked, but far more than that. The parent is so delighted with his son's return that he will have the past forgotten. "I am not worthy to be called thy son," the prodigal has said; and is about to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But that is not the way in which a father will deal with a penitent child, rebellious as he has been. He is not worthy to be called a son, but the father is still a father, and now, that the son is conscious of it himself, *he* will not chide him with his wrongdoing. He has acted a shameful part; but the fa-

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ther will make no mention of it now. He would be content with a servant's place; it is as good as he deserves—much better; but the father will not hear of it. That would be strangely at variance with the feelings which now fire the old man's heart. He so glad to fold his child in his arms again—he so overjoyed to have him under his roof—and shall he reduce him to a servant's place, as if he had not quite forgiven his rebellion—as if he still harboured some feelings of displeasure! No. He must not be permitted to mention such a proposal. He must not be allowed so to mistake his father's feelings. He speaks of his unworthiness to be called a son. There must be no more of this, becoming as it is on his part. It is enough. The father's heart cannot endure such language from the child over whom he is weeping tears of joy. “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hands, and shoes on his feet.”

O glorious illustration of the Divine forgiveness! Like the prodigal, the sinner comes trembling lest God should not receive him,—and God hails the first step in his return, and meets him while he is on the way; nay, surrounds him with gracious influences while he is yet careless of his

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own soul, awakens in him the first serious thoughts, and kindles in him the first desire after himself. The sinner would be content with the smallest spiritual blessings—just to be rescued from hell—just to have a place, however mean, in God's household—not to be an outcast for ever,—that is all he can venture to hope for; and he thinks, very naturally, that he must pray earnestly and long before God will grant him so much; not without much entreaty, doubtless, will God's reluctance be overcome; and lo, while he is yet speaking, God hears; while he is calling, ay, and before he calls, God answers; without entreaty God holds out for his acceptance, and endows him with, not merely what he would have sought, but far greater blessings—not the place of a servant, but the privileges and dignity of a son; clothes him with the best robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; adorns him with the ring of the Spirit's graces; gives him to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and summons the unfallen members of his family to rejoice that a brother has been restored to their ranks, and that the wanderer has come home. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was

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lost and is found." "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Look at this illustration, and learn from it how earnestly God desires your salvation.

III. The hindrance to your salvation is *not that you are too sinful to be forgiven*. If the gospel revealed a salvation which was not intended for the sinful, it might as well have no existence; for it is only because of sinfulness that salvation is required. Accordingly, it was "to save sinners" that "Jesus Christ came into the world." He came "to seek and save that which was lost." And while there is not the slightest hint given in Scripture of any who sought salvation being rejected because of their sinfulness, there is abundant assurance held out to us, both in plain declarations and striking examples, that no guilt, however great, can disqualify a man for becoming a partaker of God's salvation.

It is not denied that you are very sinful—it is admitted that your sinfulness may be far greater than you suppose; but it is maintained, that, if you are willing to be saved, your sinfulness cannot hinder your salvation, for the Scriptures



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declare that God's grace is still more abundant than man's abounding sin: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." It is not denied that you have sinned frequently—it is admitted that your sins may be more numerous than you can reckon up; but the fact does not render your salvation impossible, if it be true that "our God will abundantly pardon," and that the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse us from all sin. It is not denied that your sins are peculiarly aggravated because of the privileges you have abused and the convictions you have stifled; but aggravated as they are, they may be pardoned when God's "mercy is great above the heavens." It is not denied that your heart may be inveterately wicked even now; but you need not, on that account, fear that the Saviour will reject you; for has he not said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in *no wise*"—that is, for no reason, on no account, neither for past guilt nor present wickedness—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?"

Then see how these declarations of Scripture are corroborated by its examples. The Bible is rich with illustrations of the readiness with which God forgives the most aggravated offences. "A

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woman of the city, who was a sinner," once came to the Saviour, and though the proud Pharisee whose guest he was looked upon her with loathing and disdain, he received her so graciously that she gave expression to her gratitude by washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, and breaking an alabaster box of ointment very precious, and kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment; nor did she retire from his presence without the assurance, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." The thief upon the cross came to him as he hung in agony by his side; and though he had spent his life in rebellion against God, and even by the laws of man had been pronounced unworthy to live; and though his position was such that he could do nothing to atone for the misdeeds of the past; though his hands and feet were nailed to the tree, so that he could perform no service and run on no errand of love; though his tongue was cleaving to his jaws, and the shadows of death were gathering around him, so that he could not promise by future praise to make amends for past profanity; though he brought to the Saviour only the dregs of a life spent in sin; though he came to him only in the hour of his extremity, when he was

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just about to step into hell ; though he came thus, he was not rejected : that same night the Saviour and the sinner walked together in Paradise. And, passing by other instances, perhaps the wickedness of men never seemed so likely to exclude them from salvation as in the case of the Saviour's murderers. And yet even for them he prayed in his last agony, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To them he charged his apostles first to address the proclamation of pardon,—“ Beginning at Jerusalem.” Nor was this all ; under Peter's sermon, some of those very men found that the blood which they shed had atoned for the sin of shedding it ; and the death which they had been instrumental in effecting, proved to them the occasion of endless life. And though many of them persisted in their wickedness until they involved themselves in an awful doom, we have evidence that if they would only have accepted of pardon, their sins would not have proved a hindrance to their salvation. It was over them, and in view of their foreseen suffering, that the Saviour wept, and uttered the lamentation, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are

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sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Wicked as they were, they would not have been rejected, if they would only have come to him. They were lost, not because their wickedness had rendered their salvation impossible, but because they *would* not be saved. It was this,—not that they had sinned too much to be forgiven, but that they would not receive his salvation,—which wrung from him his touching complaint:—

"Alas for thee, Jerusalem! How cold thy heart to me!  
How often in these arms of love would I have gathered thee!  
My sheltering wing had been thy shield, my love thy happy  
lot!

I would it had been thus with thee! I would, but ye would  
not!"

And would you only come to him, neither your past sins nor your present sinfulness would render you unwelcome. He would fold you in his arms as tenderly as he would have folded them. He feels for you not less than he felt for them, and desires your salvation not less than he desired theirs; for he changes not; he is "the

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same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is true,—

"That hour has fled—those tears are told—the agony is past;  
The Lord has wept—the Lord has bled—but he has not  
loved—his last.

From heaven his eye is downward bent, still ranging to and  
fro,

Where'er in this wide wilderness there roams a child of woe.  
Nor his alone; the Three-in-One, who looked through Jesus'  
eye,

Could still the harps of angel-bands to hear the suppliant's  
sigh!

And when the rebel chooses wrath, God wails his hapless  
lot,

Deep breathing from his heart of love, 'I would, but ye would  
not.' "

Oh, my hearers! while you have an opportunity of coming to such a God, let not the thought of your great wickedness keep you back. Come, wicked as you may be, and you will find, as many have found before, that the number and the magnitude of your offences present no hindrance to your salvation.

IV. The hindrance is not *that the conditions of salvation place it beyond your reach*. We have shown in previous discourses that these are the simplest possible. They could not be more

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adapted to your state. You can do nothing for salvation ; and you are required to do nothing, but to be satisfied with what Christ has done on your behalf. You have no merit, and you cannot acquire any ; but no merit is required as the price of salvation. The terms are, " without money and without price." " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives a gift—and you know how that is—not as the reward of some great work, nor by the payment of some great price, but by crediting its parent's word when he says, I give you this, and by stretching out its little hand to have it placed there,— " Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein." Your case is urgent, for you may be lost in an hour ; and you are not required to wait a moment. " Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." Thus every aspect of your state has been taken into account, and the conditions of salvation perfectly adapted to your weakness and your wants, so that no man might remain unsaved because of inability to comply with the prescribed conditions.

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V. The true and only hindrance has already been mentioned in the foregoing remarks, and is plainly pointed out in our Saviour's words, "Ye would not;" "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

It seems a strange thing to say that men are unwilling to be saved, as if they preferred pain to pleasure; nor should the statement be made without some explanation. Properly speaking, men are not unwilling to be saved. They would gladly be saved in their own way. But they are unwilling to take those steps and to comply with those conditions without which salvation cannot be enjoyed. Thus the Saviour does not say, "Ye will not have life," but "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." It is not to the consequence, but to the condition, that they object. Coming to him involves certain acts or states of mind to which they are greatly averse, and by shrinking from these they exclude themselves from salvation.

Thus some of you refuse to come to Christ, because coming would involve an amount of attention to religious truth and devotion to religious duties which would interfere, more than



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you wish, with your ordinary pursuits. Some require, they think, to devote all their time to business; others, less advanced in life, wish to give what they can spare from business to pleasure. Both classes are occasionally the subjects of religious impressions, and neither is without some sense of duty. But in order that these impressions may deepen into conversion, and in order that that sense of duty may become strong enough to issue in its performance, it is necessary that time should be spent in reflection on religious themes. It is probable, we may almost say certain, that a moderate portion of your time so spent would induce impressions too strong to allow you to rest in an unsaved state, and thus give rise to that earnest search after salvation which would soon be followed by the consciousness of safety. But then, such reflection would make a breach in your pleasures, and abstract your thoughts for the time from your business. So much pleasure you are unwilling to forego; you would rather not abstract your thoughts so long from business, lest it should not be properly attended to: besides, you shrink from the mental effort which it would cost to divert your thoughts from their accustomed channels; and accordingly

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you lay yourselves open to the Saviour's charge, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." It is true that the pleasure you are pursuing is very unsatisfactory. It is true that success in business will avail you little when you come to die. It is true that the state of your affairs does not demand the whole of your time. It is true that the small portion which you might devote exclusively to religion might issue in your eternal welfare. It is true that, unless you are saved now, you must perish hereafter. But then it *would* require a portion of your time to be subtracted from pleasure and from business; and comparatively worthless as these are, and though you could spare time from them, you would rather not. You would rather not enjoy life on these conditions. If you can only go to Christ and have life thus, you would rather not go. After all that he has done for you, you will rather leave him to utter his complaint, and bring against you the fearful charge, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

Others of you refuse to come to Christ because of your dislike to the consequences which coming involves. You are not altogether unacquainted

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with the nature of religion. You know something of the impartial and implicit obedience to his commandments which the Saviour requires of his disciples. You know that every commandment which he issues must be obeyed ; that every work which he enjoins must be performed ; that every practice which he prohibits must be abandoned ; that every pleasure which interferes with the progress of religious life in yourselves, or with the advancement of his cause in the world, must be sacrificed. You know that his disciples must deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him ; that if their right eye offend them, they must pluck it out ; or their right hand, they must cut it off. You are aware that the application of a rule so rigid would necessitate a great change in your mode of life. There are many habits which it would require you to break off. It would require you to cease from customs agreeable in themselves, perhaps, and grown almost necessary to your comfort from their repeated observance. It would deprive you of your most cherished indulgences. It would require you to place a restraint on your desires, and to exercise a circumspection to which you are unaccustomed. Altogether it would necessitate a general consis-

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tency of character which you would find it difficult to maintain. And you are unwilling to take a step which would entail upon you such responsibility. You have counted the cost, and you shrink from the payment. You are loath to relinquish what you call the enjoyments of life. And because this is the consequence which appears to you to be involved in coming to Christ, you refuse to come. You know, indeed, that you cannot be saved otherwise; that unless you obey Christ now, you cannot be rewarded by him at last; that unless you bear his cross of shame he will not give you the crown of glory. But present pleasure influences you so much more powerfully than future; what you must part with appeals to your senses, and what you would receive appeals only to your spiritual perceptions; you can appreciate the visible so much better than the invisible—the things of time than the things of eternity; you can understand so well the enjoyments you possess, can form so little conception of those which are promised;—that you shrink from your duty and forego the life which you might enjoy. Allowing the animal part of your nature to triumph over the spiritual, that by which you

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are allied to the brute to prevail against that which distinguishes you as a man, you sacrifice the soul to the body, eternity to time, and will not come to Christ that ye might have life.

Others, again, do not absolutely refuse to come to Christ, but are unwilling to come now, and defer their duty to a more convenient season. Perhaps this class embraces both of those which we have noticed—at all events it embraces many individuals in both. There are some of you who would not absolutely refuse to give to religion a proper share of your attention, who, nevertheless, defer it for a time; and there are some of you, moreover, who would not absolutely resolve never to obey Christ, who also shrink from that for a time. You have not courage enough to determine that you will never come to Christ; the devil cannot persuade you to form that determination, and is too wise to frighten you by making such a proposal: but, then, you are unwilling to come now, and you please yourselves, and you please the devil, by resolving to come at some future period. When that future period will arrive you have no very distinct conception.

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Since first you began to procrastinate, the time to which you then looked forward has passed away; others have followed it, and others again have been added to them; and yet you are no more prepared for coming to Christ now than you were at the commencement. You remember the time when first you saw your danger, and were impressed with the necessity of coming to the Saviour; how you said,—“Not to-night; wait until such and such a season arrives—until such and such a purpose has been accomplished—until such and such a work is done.” And you did wait: but meanwhile you became less sensible of your danger,—your impressions were gradually effaced; and when the set time did come, you were as careless as if you had no danger to dread, and no Saviour to seek. Again you were awakened to a sense of your danger, and again you thought of seeking salvation, and again the desire for delay prevailed. A time was fixed which you thought would prove convenient for coming to Christ. Again the time came, and it found you more careless and callous than before. And thus the process has been repeated again and again, each repetition leaving your heart harder than before, and thereby diminishing the

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probability of your conversion, until for some among you we can entertain but the slightest hope. And now while I speak I tremble lest you should resist the convictions of this evening, and again defer your coming to Christ to a more convenient season. I tremble lest, acting thus, the Saviour's words should become prophetic of your doom—lest they should not merely express a present fact, but predict your future course,—Ye will not come. For do I not know that, while you are procrastinating, your day of grace is drawing rapidly to a close ; while you are delaying to seek for salvation, your “judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not ?” Resist or trifle with the present conviction, and you may never have another. Say to the Spirit to-night, “Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee,” and he may never come again. Refuse to go to Christ now, and before to-morrow he may be for ever beyond your reach. “This night thy soul may be required of thee.” And then the Saviour's voice will deepen into a sterner tone as he speaks to you from amid the splendours of the judgment, and the words of our text change into the awful sentence which intimates that the



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season of probation has passed away—a sentence which will ring in your ears, and sting your conscience in the place of woe;—“Ye would not come unto me that ye might have life.” “IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD! HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?”

We have thus attempted to give an explanation of your unwillingness to come to Christ, and your hearts tell you how true it is. Your unwillingness might be traced to other reasons besides those we have indicated, did time permit. But those will suggest, and so lead to the discovery of, the others. Certain it is that, however it may be explained, unwillingness is the only hindrance to your salvation. Of every unsaved Gospel hearer, it is true that Christ would have saved him, and he would not be saved. He may plead other reasons, but the Saviour's words furnish a conclusive answer to every plea which he can urge,—“I WOULD, AND YE WOULD NOT.”

LONDON :  
Printed by G. BARCLAY, Castle St. Leicester Sq.







LaVergne, TN USA  
30 July 2010

191529LV00006B/200/A







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ISBN 1104254069



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